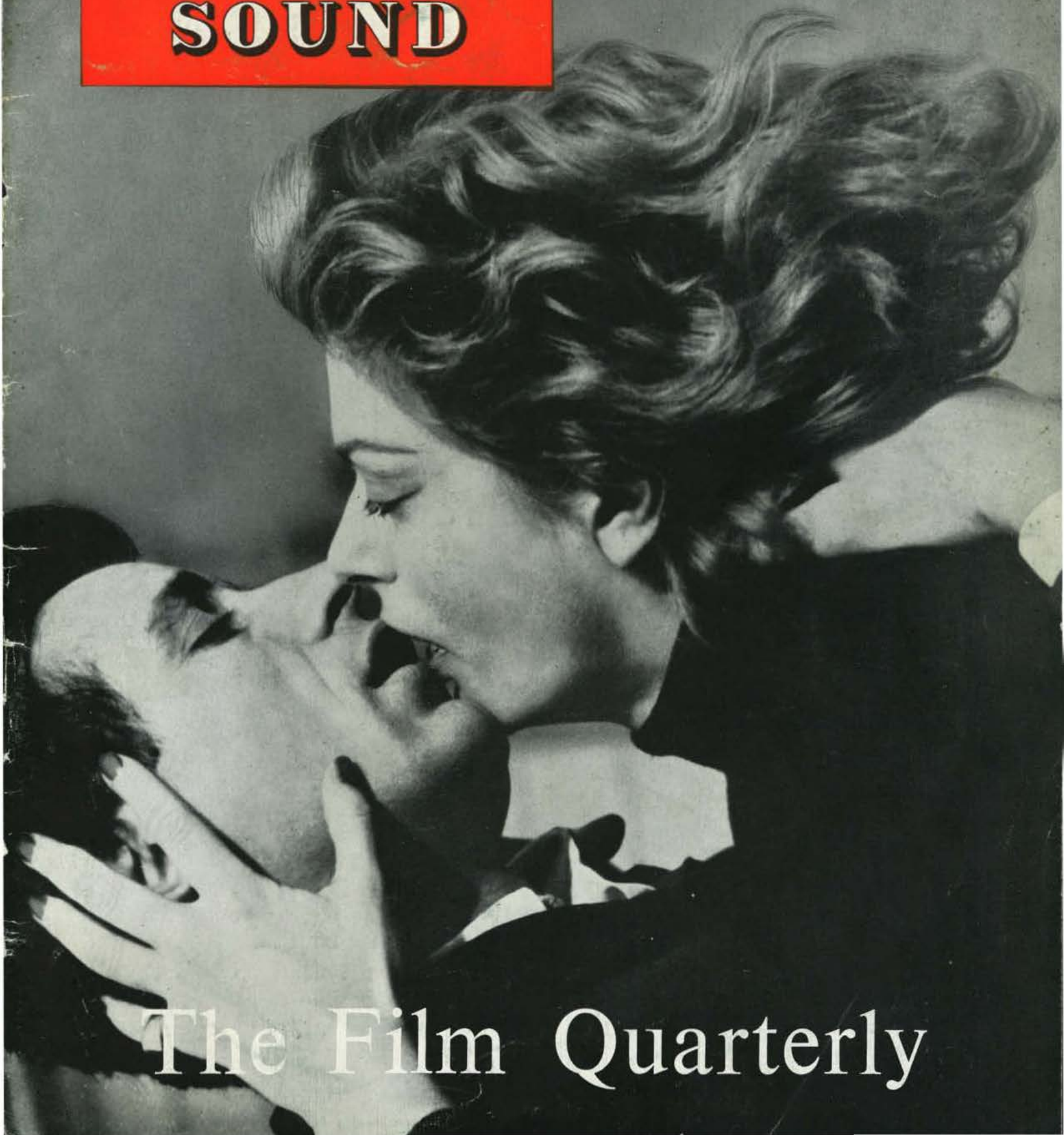


WINTER 1955-6

Three Shillings and Sixpence

SIGHT AND SOUND



The Film Quarterly



“DOWN A LONG WAY”

“DOWN A LONG WAY” is a 20-minute coloured cartoon film showing why an oil well is sited in a particular spot and how the well is drilled.

The hit or miss system of siting wells in the early days is compared with modern scientific methods, and geological and geophysical operations are shown.

“DOWN A LONG WAY” follows on the earlier film “AS OLD AS THE HILLS” which shows how the oil was formed and trapped deep in the earth.

a wide distribution in many countries. They also include films of special interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. One of these films is described briefly here, and details of the others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge.★

A SERIES of films, sponsored by The British Petroleum Company, has been made to illustrate those chapters in the story of the oil industry which are of more popular interest.

All these films have been made to entertain as well as instruct and are already enjoying



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FEBRUARY TO APRIL at the NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

A TRIBUTE TO WARNER BROTHERS

The National Film Theatre is presenting a twelve-week season of films in tribute to the achievements of Warner Brothers—a survey of the company's general trends starting from the first sound films.

Warner Brothers have made available their entire resources of films ; and among the important revivals of the season will be :—*The Musicals* : GOLD-DIGGERS OF 1933, ON YOUR TOES ; *The Gangsters* : PUBLIC ENEMY, LITTLE CAESAR ; *The Sociological Drama* : THEY WON'T FORGET ; *Biographical Drama* : JUAREZ ; *Comedy* : SWING YOUR LADY, A SLIGHT CASE OF MURDER. *Off-beat* : GREEN PASTURES.

Each programme will be completed with extracts from contemporary and comparable films produced by the company.

A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

ALLIGATOR NAMED DAISY, AN (JAFID) Comedy about a man torn between two women and an alligator (female), with much reptilian slapstick. (Donald Sinden, Diana Dors, Jean Carson, Daisy ; director, J. Lee Thompson. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

***ARTISTS AND MODELS (Paramount)** The latest Martin and Lewis is too scrappy and uneven, but has some good ideas about horror-comics and their purveyors. (Eddie Mayehoff, Anita Ekberg, Shirley Maclaine ; director, Frank Tashlin. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

***BESPOKE OVERCOAT, THE (Romulus)** Modern Jewish variation on Gogol's *The Cloak*, adapted by Wolf Mankowitz from his own play. Interesting short story film, with fine performance by Alfie Bass. *Reviewed.* (David Kossoff ; director, Jack Clayton.)

***BIG KNIFE, THE (U.A.)** Odets' rather trumped-up play about Hollywood has flashes of good writing, and is slickly transferred by Robert Aldrich. Jack Palance sincere but miscast as the trapped aspiring actor. (Ida Lupino, Shelley Winters, Wendell Corey, Jean Hagen.)

COCKLESHELL HEROES (Columbia) Anglo-American war film celebrating exploits of a Royal Marine team in a daring raid on Bordeaux harbour. The service mixture as before. (Jose Ferrer, Trevor Howard ; director, Jose Ferrer. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

***DIABOLIQUE, LES (Films de France)** Clouzot's determined shocker about wife and mistress of a headmaster who conspire to murder him. Gruesome, but finally less frightening than St. Trinians. *Reviewed.* (Simone Signoret, Vera Clouzot, Paul Meurisse.)

****FIVE BOYS FROM BARSKA STREET (Synchrocine)** Polish study of a group of juvenile delinquents, with some propagandist stodginess but a current of genuine human feeling. (Director, Alexander Ford. Agfacolor.)

GIRL IN THE RED VELVET SWING, THE (Fox) The Thaw-White murder case, *cause célèbre* of the early 1900's, reconstructed as a ponderously conventional melodrama. (Ray Milland, Joan Collins, Farley Granger ; director, Richard Fleischer. CinemaScope and DeLuxe Color.)

****GRANDES MANOEUVRES, LES (Films de France)** The new René Clair is a bitter comedy of love, set in a provincial town 40 years ago. Some excellent passages, but final impression a bit thin. *Reviewed.* (Gerard Philipe, Michèle Morgan. Eastmancolor.)

***HELEN OF TROY (Warners)** Some fairly absurd new light on ancient history, with famous lovers romantically whitewashed from first to last time she saw Paris. But the spectacle is spectacular, the siege of Troy lavishly ferocious. (Rossana Podesta, Jack Sernas ; director, Robert Wise. CinemaScope and Warnercolor.)

****HILL 24 DOESN'T ANSWER (Eros)** Sketch film about Israel during the tensions of 1948. Script and playing uneven, but direction has some fine imaginative strokes. *Reviewed.* (Haya Harari, Edward Mulhare, Michael Shilo ; director, Thorold Dickinson.)

I DIED A THOUSAND TIMES (Warners) Indifferent remake of *High Sierra*, less well acted than the original and padded out with sentimental subplot. (Jack Palance, Shelley Winters ; director, Stuart Heisler. CinemaScope and Warnercolor.)

***IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER (M.G.M.)** Three ex-service comrades meet again after 10 years and find they can't stand each other ; an oddly jaundiced musical with some bright numbers. *Reviewed.* (Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse, Dan Dailey ; directors, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen. CinemaScope and Eastmancolor.)

JOSEPHINE AND MEN (Independent) British comedy about a girl with a thing about helpless men, with a script that has a thing about helpless jokes. (Glynis Johns, Donald Sinden, Peter Finch, Jack Buchanan ; director, Roy Boulting. Eastmancolor.)

KING'S RHAPSODY (British Lion) Errol Flynn introduces a mildly alien note to this very British musical, but Anna Neagle staunchly keeps the Novello flag flying on the battlements of Ruritanian renunciation. (Patrice Wymore ; director, Herbert Wilcox. CinemaScope and Eastmancolor.)

LADY AND THE TRAMP (Disney) Disney's first CinemaScope cartoon feature, about the adventures of a spaniel puppy and the mongrel who befriends her. Some ingenious moments, but too much of the usual anthropomorphic high jinks. (Directors, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson. Technicolor.)

****LADYKILLERS, THE (JAFID)** Dear old Mrs. Wilberforce takes in a persuasive but sinister lodger and finds herself the unwitting accomplice in an outrageous robbery ; a comedy of highly distinctive flavour, rising to several lessons on murder as a fine art. *Reviewed.* (Alec Guinness, Cecil Parker, Katie Johnson ; director, Alexander Mackendrick. Technicolor.)

LAND OF THE PHARAOHS (Warners) Standard pre-Christian spectacle, with Jack Hawkins as obsessed pharaoh responsible for building the first pyramid. Some of Trauner's sets are impressive, but the script credit to William Faulkner merely mysterious. (Joan Collins ; director, Howard Hawks. CinemaScope and Warnercolor.)

LEFT HAND OF GOD, THE (Fox) Stranded American flyer in China disguises himself as Catholic priest. Displeasing mixture of melodrama and religiosity. (Humphrey Bogart, Gene Tierney ; director, Edward Dmytryk. CinemaScope and DeLuxe Color.)

LOVE IS A MANY-SPLENDORED THING (Fox) American journalist and Eurasian lady doctor briefly involved in ill-fated affair. High-flown sing-song dialogue, Hong Kong in CinemaScope, theme tune. (Jennifer Jones, William Holden ; director, Henry King. DeLuxe Color.)

*****MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS (M.G.M.)** Reissue of Vincente Minnelli's most captivating musical ; leaves from a family album, with enchanting songs and decor, delicious playing by Judy Garland, Mary Astor, Leon Ames. (Lucile Bremer, Margaret O'Brien. Technicolor, 1946.)

***MISTER ROBERTS (Warners)** Expert playing by Henry Fonda and Jack Lemmon in occasionally funny version of the stage hit about a U.S. supply ship inactive in Pacific waters. *Reviewed.* (James Cagney, William Powell ; directors, John Ford and Mervyn LeRoy. CinemaScope and Warnercolor.)

*****NIGHT OF THE HUNTER, THE (U.A.)** Strange, powerful melodrama about a crazed evangelist and two children trying to escape from him. Charles Laughton's direction occasionally tries too much, but all the same achieves a fascinating individual style. *Reviewed.* (Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, Lillian Gish.)

OH ROSALINDA!! (A.B. Pathe) Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* Powell-and-Pressburgered into a would-be musical comedy of New Vienna, with heavy acknowledgments to Lubitsch and *La Ronde*. (Anton Walbrook, Michael Redgrave, Ludmilla Tcherina, Mel Ferrer ; directors, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

****REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE (Warners)** Arresting study of a disturbed adolescent, finely played by James Dean. Some over-simplifications, but many daring raids on American family life. *Reviewed.* (Nathalie Wood, Jim Backus ; director, Nicholas Ray. CinemaScope and Warnercolor.)

*****RICHARD III (Independent)** Laurence Olivier brilliant as Shakespeare's scheming king, in a satisfyingly forthright and dynamic adaptation. *Reviewed.* (John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Claire Bloom ; director, Laurence Olivier. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

SIMON AND LAURA (JAFID) Adaptation of stage comedy about a quarrelsome theatrical couple required to portray idyllic domesticity on TV. Mild but not bitter. (Peter Finch, Kay Kendall ; director, Muriel Box. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

STORM OVER THE NILE (Independent) New CinemaScoped version of *The Four Feathers*, with unabashed jingoism and smashing heroics in the desert intact. (Laurence Harvey, Anthony Steel, Mary Ure ; directors, Zoltan Korda and Terence Young. Technicolor.)

****STRADA, LA (Curzon)** Italian film about a simpleton girl who becomes the assistant of a travelling strong man. A "laugh clown laugh" melodrama with some interesting atmosphere and characterisation. *Previously reviewed.* (Giuiletta Masina, Anthony Quinn, Richard Basehart ; director, Federico Fellini.)

***TALL MEN, THE (Fox)** Sturdy Western featuring cattle trek, Indians, invigorating CinemaScope landscapes and Jane Russell. *Reviewed.* (Clark Gable, Robert Ryan ; director, Raoul Walsh. DeLuxe Color.)

TENDER TRAP, THE (M.G.M.) Adaptation of the stage play about a New York bachelor with girl trouble ; quite pleasant, and good playing by Celeste Holm and David Wayne. (Frank Sinatra, Debbie Reynolds ; director, Charles Walters. CinemaScope and Eastmancolor.)

****THIS IS CINERAMA (Cinerama Productions)** The biggest of all the big screens, and as a stunt undoubtedly the best. Plenty of surprising *trompe l'oeil*, fine Venetian views and an exciting airplane tour of the U.S.A. (Producers, Lowell Thomas and Merian C. Cooper. Print by Technicolor.)

***TO CATCH A THIEF (Paramount)** Hitchcock's comedy thriller about Riviera jewel thieves ; too much paste, but some characteristically brilliant sparkles. *Reviewed.* (Cary Grant, Grace Kelly ; Jessie Royce Landis. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

***TRIAL (M.G.M.)** The trial of a Mexican boy accused of causing a white girl's death is melodramatically rigged for a series of slick clichés on communism, McCarthyism, racial prejudice and the Lot. Some clever but ultimately fatiguing surface naturalism. (Glenn Ford, Dorothy MacGuire, Arthur Kennedy, John Hodiak ; director, Mark Robson.)

***WAYWARD WIFE, THE (Gala)** Dubbed version of *La Provinciale*, with Gina Lollobrigida as a professor's wife who takes a lover. Untidy drama with some interesting characterisation on the fringes. (Franco Interlenghi ; director, Mario Soldati.)

SIGHT AND SOUND

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ON THE COVER : Georges Foundas and Melina Mercuri in Michael Yannis' Greek film, *Stella*.

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THE FRONT PAGE

1955 STARTED notably with Vittorio de Sica's long-delayed *Umberto D.* Twelve months later, this study of an old age pensioner still seems the outstanding film of the year, the most austere eloquent panel in the de Sica-Zavattini fresco of poverty that began with *Sciuscià*.

The impact of Bunuel's *El* (which opened an exciting National Film Theatre season that included a revival of *L'Age d'Or* and the première of *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*, a comedy of murders with many brilliant and uniquely disturbing moments) is hardly less persistent. This close, concentrated drama of a paranoiac's obsessions, is one of Bunuel's most daring works; in twenty-five years' time we shall probably look at it again with as much astonishment as now at *L'Age d'Or*.

Five more films of memorable quality, from as many different countries—Renoir's *French Cancan*; Olivier's *Richard III*; the Chinese opera film, *Shan-Po and Ying-Tai*; Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter*; and Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*. Renoir's film has the tenderness, evocative grace and exquisite colour that has given his work since *The River* its special sensuous, romantic appeal. *Richard III* not only contains Laurence Olivier's superb performance, the most exciting achievement by an actor this year, but puts Shakespeare's historical melodrama on the screen with splendid incisiveness. The Chinese film is a beautiful novelty, a delicate theatrical work simply, almost primitively transplanted. Charles Laughton's first essay as director is courageous and fascinating, with an atmospheric force entirely its own, even more extraordinary in the context of current American production. And the Japanese adventure story, though over-long and over-ambitious, has some irresistible panache and virtuosity.

A year, in fact, of unusually varied riches, when films of such distinction come from Italy, Mexico, France, Britain, China, America and Japan.



A number of other films are worth recording. From France: two films with excellent first halves—Clair's *Les Grandes Manoeuvres*, with its skill and refinement that finally become bloodless, and Dassin's *Rififi*, which contains an hour of melodrama as inventive and gripping as the best Hollywood thrillers of a few years ago. From America: Benedek's *The Wild One*, in spite of its

weak ending a remarkable, penetrating study of juvenile delinquents, with a fine performance by Marlon Brando; *Marty*, that slight, shrewd, intimate story of two lonely New Yorkers; two musicals of individual wit and charm, *My Sister Eileen* and *So This is Paris*, which show the talent of Richard Quine winning through some unsatisfactory scripting; and the seductive hokum of *A Star is Born*, a frame for the magnificent return of Judy Garland.

From Italy: *La Strada*, undeniably original in conception, interestingly executed, but with something too confected about it; a pity Fellini is not introduced to London by the social comedy (*Lo Sciecco Bianco, I Vitelloni*) which is perhaps his most personal work so far. From Britain: Alexander Mackendrick's *The Lady Killers*, a comedy with pleasantly original and gruesome undertones. From Israel: Thorold Dickinson's *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer*, the best parts of which vividly convey the tensions of that country's triangular 1948 war. From Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, etc.: *Confidential Report*, in which Orson Welles reminds one of the prodigality of his talent and infuriates one by wasting it.



For acting, Olivier and Judy Garland carry off the palms, with Brando's black rebel and Katharine Hepburn—who, though miscast, played with marvellous attack in *Summer Madness*—not far behind. Three members of the cast of *Confidential Report*—Katina Paxinou, Suzanne Flon and Michael Redgrave—created splendidly bizarre portraits, and also Evelyn Varden in *The Night of the Hunter*. One enjoyed the strange, wistful mime of Giulietta Masina in *La Strada*, the individuality of Aldo Ray in *The Gentle Sergeant*, the dry comedy of Tom Ewell in *The Seven Year Itch* and of Margaret Leighton in *The Constant Husband*, the bizarre menace of Alec Guinness in *The Ladykillers*. One welcomed the return of Henry Fonda in *Mister Roberts*, Lillian Gish in *The Night of the Hunter*, and Bette Davis in *The Virgin Queen*, rampaging for the second time as Elizabeth I. Among newcomers (to the screen), the late James Dean showed outstanding promise in *East of Eden*, as did Jo Van Fleet (as the mother) in the same film; and Pearl Bailey brought her wonderful vivacity to *Carmen Jones*.



Good shorts and documentaries—*Thursday's Children*, best British non-fiction film for several years, Oscarred in Hollywood but neglected by the circuits here; *A Time*

Opposite: the first Ugo Betti film. Magali Noel, Madeleine Robinson and Raf Vallone in "Les Possédées," directed by Charles Brabant from the play "Island of Goats."

out of War, also Oscared, a subtle, melancholy Civil War episode ; *The Vanishing Prairie*, by far the most engrossing and least facetiously distorted of Disney's "True Life Adventure" series, and Haanstra's *The Rival World* for Shell, a fierce account of pestilential insects ; Emmer's *Picasso*, a finely constructed and lucid film essay, whether one agrees with it or not ; and a charming Czech evocation of the prehistoric natural world, *Journey into a Primeval Age*. Not a particularly good year for U.P.A., except for *Fudget's Budget*, enjoyably wry in its lament for the financial difficulties of a married couple.

The National Film Theatre ran two important seasons : of work by Luis Bunuel and by John Ford, the latter a monumental and rewarding survey from *Three Bad Men* to *The Sun Shines Bright*, with two particularly charming, characteristic revelations : *Judge Priest* and *Steamboat Round the Bend*. The repertory series, Sixty Years of Cinema, notably introduced Christiansen's *Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1920), magic, superstition, diabolism, etc., ruthlessly examined under the psychologist's microscope.



It is sad to record a number of losses. On September 30, 1955, the American cinema's most gifted acting discovery since Marlon Brando, James Dean, was tragically killed in a motor accident at the age of 24 (*Giant*, the film he made after *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, has not yet reached this country.) On July 26, at the age of 38, after a brain illness, Frank Stauffacher died. He not only pioneered the "Art in Cinema" series at the San Francisco Museum of Art, described in recent issues of this magazine by Albert Johnson, but was a talented film-maker. His very attractive *Notes on the Port of Saint Francis*, an impression of San Francisco, won the Robert Flaherty award for 1952. The Soviet director Vladimir Legoshin, best known in Europe for his delightful *Lone White Sail* (1938), died in June, at the age of 50. James Agee, poet, critic and scriptwriter (*The Quiet One*, *The African Queen*, *The Night of the Hunter*) died on May 17 at the age of 45. Robert Riskin, scenarist for many of Capra's most successful films (*It Happened One Night*, *Mr. Deeds*, *You Can't Take it With You*), died on October 22, aged 58, after an illness of many years. The distinguished American playwright Robert E. Sherwood, who died aged 58 on November 15, had worked off and on in the cinema for twenty years, scripting *The Ghost Goes West*, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, *Rebecca*, *The Best Years of our Lives*, *Man on a Tightrope*. Two of his best known plays, *The Petrified Forest* and *Idiot's Delight*, were filmed. Finally, the veteran director Lloyd Bacon died on November 16, aged 65. He had been a comedian in the silent days, appearing in several Chaplin shorts ; he directed Al Jolson in *The Singing Fool*, some excellent 30's musicals including *42nd Street* and *Footlight Parade*, and of his numerous films since that time one remembers particularly a good Bette Davis melodrama, *Marked Women* (1937), *A Slight Case of Murder* (1938), and the gentle, appealing *Sunday Dinner for a Soldier* (1945).

And 1956 ? The most obvious prospect is the continuing Battle of the Screens. *Oklahoma!*, the first feature in Todd-AO, shot on 65 mm. film, has opened in America and will soon be seen here ; 20th Century-Fox have made *Carousel* in a new 55 mm. CinemaScope process, to which they intend to switch over all future CinemaScope production. And the enlarged curvilinear VistaVision screen made its appearance with *Strategic Air Command*. The screens, in fact, are still getting bigger. Finally, the Dynamic Frame—only one of the new processes first explored in this country, though originated by an American—has yet to make its mark.



In England, the industry as a whole presents a more secure, a more solid face ; but one cannot pretend that, creatively speaking, conditions have improved. One's general impression of the year is of a great deal of domestic comedy and wartime reconstructions. The outlook for independent producers is restricted—either they work in association with one of the major companies, on a major budget scale, or they make second feature "quickies" with few sets and an American star. A waste land still exists between the first feature (£100,000 upwards) and the second (ceiling, £20,000), a waste land that might be planted with enterprise and adventure ; but the example of the "offbeat" American production (*Riot in Cell Block 11*, *Marty*, *The Night of the Hunter*), which remains an important creative phenomenon in Hollywood, is unfollowed.

Ealing Studios have been sold to the B.B.C. (see page 117), and the New Year shows many of our leading talents in varying degrees of remoteness or uncertainty. Carol Reed is working in Paris for an American company, David Lean planning a film in India, Robert Hamer has been filming plays for television, Anthony Asquith has made only a short film during the year, Thorold Dickinson has been in Israel. And Michael Anderson, director of the most accomplished and serious of the service films, *The Dam Busters*, has gone to Hollywood.



Elsewhere, there have been some encouraging signs. In spite of censorship and financial difficulties, the Italian cinema has continued to produce remarkable work ; de Sica is starting on a new independent venture with Zavattini, and Castellani is preparing a contemporary subject. There is reason to believe, too, that the Russian cinema is on the verge of renewing itself—*The Cicada*, *A Great Family*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the present activities of Dovzhenko, Donskoi and Youtkevich, suggest that a freer range of subjects is now available. There are stirrings in India and China ; tantalising reports continue from Japan ; young directors are establishing a reputation in Spain and Greece. At least if the English-speaking cinema has for the moment less than usual to offer, the balance is being made up in other places.



"A Girl in Black" : Marina (Helle Lambetti) and her brother (Tassos Vlachos), wounded in a fight

In the Picture

"A Girl in Black"

MICHAEL YANNIS' new Greek film, *A Girl in Black*, is a love story set on the rugged and beautiful island of Ydra. Its leading players are Helle Lambetti and Dimitri Horn, who appeared together in the same director's *Windfall in Athens*. The film was photographed entirely on location by the English cameraman, Walter Lassally, who writes :

Making a film in Greece is a stimulating experience. The weather is glorious enough to give any English cameraman a new lease of life, working conditions are pleasant and not unduly subject to pressures—the schedule can be strenuous or leisurely, as necessity dictates, there is a surprising number of excellent actors, and the technical limitations are challenging rather than heartbreaking.

The Greek film industry produces about twenty pictures a year, many of no more than "B" standard ; it is only since *Windfall in*

Athens that a few have begun to be widely shown outside their country of origin. Costs are very low by English standards and sometimes films are "in production" for a period of eighteen months, shooting proceeding sporadically, with long gaps in between, waiting for actors to become available or new backing to be found. Studio, laboratory and recording facilities are often somewhat primitive, and the best equipment is owned by one or two larger companies, who guard it jealously against independents.

A Girl in Black was shot in eight weeks, with a small camera and without a single studio interior ; all the sound was post-synchronised. It is a refreshing thought that this film could be made in Greece for less money than goes into the average British second feature, and yet with a general "production value" that would put it into the £100,000-plus category in Britain. When we wanted to, we worked three weeks without a stop, seven days a week, often ten hours a day. Then, perhaps, we stopped for a week's rest, while waiting for an actor to finish with another commitment, or preparing a new interior location for shooting. Financial pressures make this kind of schedule impossible in Britain, where everything goes into high gear the moment a film takes the floor, and stays there until the first print is ready.

It was a pleasant surprise to find how immensely cooperative Greek people are when it comes to film-making—many of them, one feels, would gladly move out of their houses if necessary. On one occasion we laid rails for a trucking shot right across the island's tiny post-office (which contained its only telephone) in the middle of the day, and shot there for three or four hours. . . .

People are only too anxious to take part in crowd scenes, and will wait patiently for many hours ; practically all the islanders of Ydra must have appeared in our film at some point or other,



Eduardo Paolozzi and Michael Andrews as the two East End deaf-mutes in Lorenza Mazzetti's "Together"

and some of them proved capable of giving astonishingly good performance in the emotional scenes with which the story abounds. Michael Yannis, who wrote his own script, is young, enthusiastic and able to galvanise the local population into excitement by his own example. The story was written directly in shooting script form, which is the way of working that he prefers. It went on to film practically unaltered. He has a dexterous camera and cutting style, and likes, as he puts it, his camera "to explode into violent movement at emotional climaxes."

Helle Lambetti, who is well loved in the theatre at Athens, and whose seventh film this is, receives her best opportunity here. In a powerful role she gives a really astonishing performance. *A Girl in Black*, incidentally, is a perfect example of a film which would lose by being photographed in colour and ruined by Cinema-Scope. The little white houses, streets and open stairways of the island, the black dresses of the women, together with the intimate nature of the story, make it a perfect black-and-white subject.

Experiment

The British Film Institute's Experimental Committee, which has been able to sponsor a number of original film projects through a grant from the British Film Production Fund, has now several of them ready for showing. All these films have offered opportunities to young talent, in some cases coming freshly to the cinema; and though they are experimental in widely differing ways, the intention has been to support ideas unlikely to find sponsorship under ordinary commercial conditions.

Two of the films, *Together*, a story of two deaf-mutes living in London's East End, directed by Lorenza Mazzetti, and *Momma Don't Allow*, a dramatic impression by Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson of jazz enthusiasts at a suburban dancehall, will be included in the first programme, which opens at the National Film Theatre in February. These—with Lindsay Anderson's *O Dreamland*, a ferocious study of an English funfair, which will also be included in the programme—have a broad approach in common. For they all favour a kind of candid camera technique, utilising actual locations and ordinary people. They are "documentary" in the sense that they are concerned with actuality and with social issues—but their main emphasis is on people, and in this way they are closer to Italian neo-realism than to any tradition of film-making in this country.

Other projects sponsored by the Committee are a film based on episodes of Dante's *Inferno*, employing a silhouette technique, by a young sculptor, Peter King; and a cartoon film of Jules Verne's *Round the World in 80 Days* by Anthony Gross and Hector Hoppin. This film was actually shot in France (where Gross and Hoppin had already made *Joie de Vivre*) in 1938-39, but completion was interrupted by the outbreak of war. The material has now been edited, and a soundtrack added.

In association with the British Council, the Committee has also produced a film on the new Coventry Cathedral, in which Dudley Shaw Ashton analyses Basil Spence's designs and shows, by use of

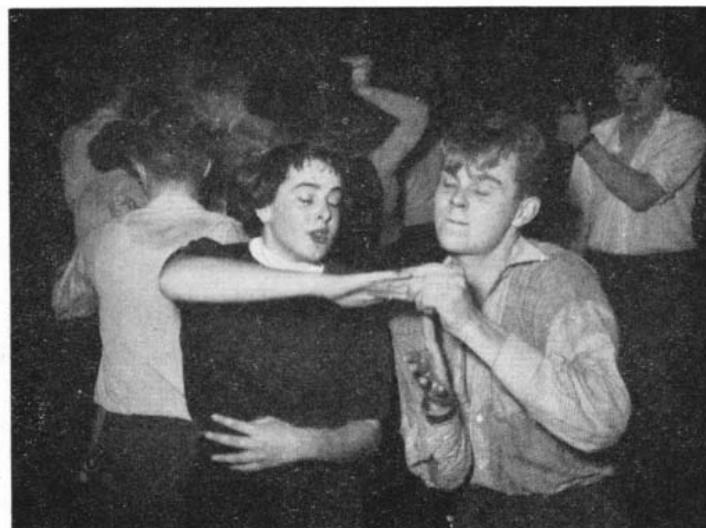
models, what the completed building will look like; in association with Egret Films, *Rowlandson's England* (included in the Royal Command Film Performance programme), in which John Hawkesworth evokes the world of this artist through his drawings; and, with Associated British-Pathe, *The Door in the Wall*, in which Glenn Alvey demonstrates the "Dynamic Frame," discussed elsewhere in this issue.

Hands Across the Sea

While the ITA presents American TV shows such as *Dragnet* and *I Love Lucy* to British audiences, American television, according to the critic of the *New York Times*, has recently been "invaded by the British motion picture industry." The *Times* critic mentioned *The Constant Husband*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, *The Captain's Paradise*, *The Man in the White Suit*, *Brief Encounter* and *Great Expectations*, all shown on TV within a period of a week or so. "This veritable deluge of superior British films," he commented, "is not going unnoticed by viewers. . . . Where Hollywood tended to think of itself as having a monopoly on film, television has found an alternative supply in London. If Hollywood elects to meet British competition by releasing to TV more of its newer films, it might seem to be only adding to its headaches. But in the long run, the film capital may have no alternative."

Reactions after the screening of *The Constant Husband* (the film's American premiere) were, however, apparently rather less favourable. The American correspondent of *Today's Cinema* commented: "The colour picture (broadcast as such) ran for 90 minutes. Obviously, it had to be cut and interrupted in addition by numerous commercials. Some few critics liked it. Most didn't. . . . I don't think the showing did a great deal to enhance the prestige of the British film with the broad public." London Films, said to have received \$200,000 for this programme, plan also to present *Richard III* on American TV shortly.

Meanwhile, the case of *The Dam Busters* has raised again the perennial issue of the type of distribution received by British films in the U.S. In answer to charges that the American distribution company, Warners, had promoted the film inadequately, notably in arranging for its first New York showing at a Brooklyn cinema not frequented by the critics, Associated British Pictures issued a statement admitting that American box-office results "have not reached the heights anticipated," but defending Warners' "intensive selling" of the film. More serious was the charge, raised in a question in the House of Commons, of "gross distortion" by the American distributors, who were said to have introduced shots of Flying Fortresses among the British Lancasters. Writing in the *Daily Express* after seeing the American version, David Lewin said that, "Hollywood has added two American Flying Fortresses. They are seen crashing in flames as the British planes swoop in to attack the dams. Hollywood's intention was to give added drama and tension to the raid. No shots of British Lancasters were available. . . . But at no time is there a suggestion that the Americans took part in the raid." In any event, the fact remains that the film has been substantially cut and to some extent altered for the American market. A long run in an "art house"



"Mamma Don't Allow," a jazz film by Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson: a dancehall couple.



Child and prospective stepfather : a scene from "Lovers and Lollipops," the new film by Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin, who made "The Little Fugitive." Shot in the same style, it describes the reactions of a little girl (Cathy Dunn) when her mother (Lori March) takes a new husband (Gerald O'Loughlin)

may still seem a sounder proposition to the British producer who would like his film to remain intact, rather than these hazards of commercial distribution or the cuts and interruptions apparently inevitable in a TV showing.

Ealing Studios

The announcement last October that Ealing Studios had been sold to B.B.C. Television (price, £350,000) also stated that production would continue at other premises at the rate of approximately six pictures a year. This effort to maintain continuity of production will presumably ensure that Ealing—probably since the war the most celebrated of British studios—manages to survive for some time as a separate entity. But it is difficult to envisage the company preserving its particular individuality in these anomalous conditions; almost impossible to imagine, for instance, that a homeless Ealing could survive the retirement from production of Sir Michael Balcon.

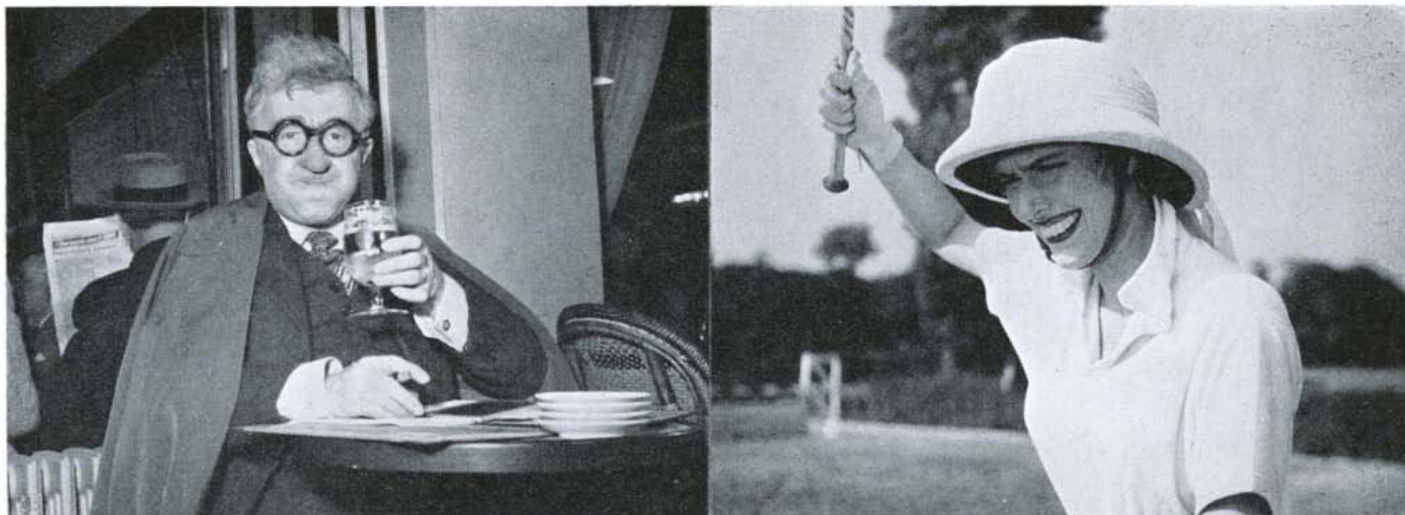
Ealing Studios, built in the early 1930's, were until 1938 run by Basil Dean. During this time Carol Reed had made his first films there, Dean had produced such best-sellers as *The Constant Nymph*, *Lorna Doone* and the George Formby comedies, but the company did not remain solvent. Balcon, whose production career had begun in 1920, when he made advertising films at Birmingham in partnership with Victor Saville, took over in 1938. His record was already impressive—he had been in charge of production at Islington (*The Rat*, *Journey's End*, *The Lodger*), where he encouraged the young Hitchcock, at the Gaumont British Studios at Shepherd's Bush (*Rome Express*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Man Who Knew too Much*, *Rhodes of Africa*); he had briefly acted as production chief at the M.G.M. British studios (*A Yank at Oxford*). The impact of Balcon at Ealing was felt very quickly, in the production of realistic films with ordinary backgrounds (*There Ain't no Justice*, *The Proud Valley*), and of comedies (Will Hay and Tommy Trinder). With Cavalcanti as associate producer

from 1940 to 1947, these two lines of approach persisted, developing into the firm realism of the war pictures (*The Foreman Went to France*, *Next of Kin*), and the famous cycle of "Ealing comedies." The latter have included one classic, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, and several films of unusual charm and originality, like *Hue and Cry*, *Whisky Galore*, and *The Ladykillers*. These films made Ealing's name in the world market, developed the talents of Alec Guinness, T. E. B. Clarke, and three of the most gifted directors now working in the British cinema, Robert Hamer, Alexander Mackendrick and Henry Cornelius.

Two of these directors have for some time now been lost to Ealing, and their absence has inevitably made itself felt; recently the studio's programme has presented a solid rather than an adventurous appearance. Continuity in personnel and production has been Balcon's basis of success; its danger has been that it has at times encouraged a lapse into formula, but its great advantage that it has ensured the studio a reputation as a company unequalled in this country. Financial considerations—Ealing was apparently a studio difficult to run economically to the best advantage—presumably enforced the sale. The melancholy consequence is that there are now only three major studios in this country (Pinewood, Elstree and Shepperton) devoted wholly to film production. The sale of Ealing Studios is not only a loss, but also perhaps the most significant pointer to date towards the change in the balance of power between films and television.

Memorial Fund

The General Council of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association has resolved to set up a fund to commemorate the work of the late Walter R. Fuller, to be used for an endowment in his memory at the homes of the Cinematograph Trade Benevolent Fund. Contributions will be much appreciated, and cheques made payable to the "W. R. Fuller Memorial Fund" can be sent to the C.E.A., 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2.



Two characters from "Les Carnets de Major Thompson," Preston Sturges' first film for six years. Noel-Noel as the français moyen and Genevieve Page as the Major's sporty first wife. Other leading players are Jack Buchanan (the Major) and Martine Carol (his second, and French, wife)

Work in Progress

Italy

de Sica and Zavattini : *Il Tetto (The Roof)*, story of a poor young couple in search of a house. With non-professional players.

King Vidor : *War and Peace*, adapted by Irwin Shaw, with Henry Fonda (Pierre), Audrey Hepburn (Natasha), Mel Ferrer (Andrei). (VistaVision : Technicolor.)

U.S.A.

John Ford : *The Searchers*, a Western, with John Wayne, Jeff Hunter, Vera Miles. (VistaVision : Technicolor.)

Vincente Minnelli : *Lust for Life*, a biography of Van Gogh, script by Norman Corwin, produced by John Houseman. With Kirk Douglas as Van Gogh, Anthony Quinn as Gauguin. (CinemaScope : Eastmancolor.)

Fritz Lang : *While the City Sleeps*, a melodrama, with Dana Andrews, Ida Lupino, George Sanders.

Richard Quine : *The Solid Gold Cadillac*, a comedy with Judy Holliday.

Robert Parrish : *To Tame a Land*, a Western with Marlon Brando, the actor's first independent production. (VistaVision : Technicolor.)

U.S.S.R.

Mark Donskoi : *Mother*, from the novel by Maxim Gorky.

Serge Youtkevich : *Othello*.

Kozintzev : *Don Quixote*, with Tcherkassov.

Georgi Alexandrov : *The Pilgrims*, comedy about tourists behind the Iron Curtain.

Dzigan : *Prologue*, a story of the 1905 Revolution.

France

Jean Renoir : *Ellena et les Hommes*, from his own script, a 19th century comedy of manners. With Ingrid Bergman, Mel Ferrer, Jean Marais. (Technicolor.)

Max Ophuls : *Les Montparnos*, an evocation of Paris and its painters in the 20's. With Mel Ferrer as Modigliani. (Technicolor.)

John Berry : *Don Juan*, with Fernandel.

Claude Autant-Lara : *Adorable Julia*, from Somerset Maugham's *Theatre*, with Danielle Darrieux, Vittorio de Sica, Micheline Presle.

Raymond Rouleau : *Les Sorcières de Salem*, from Arthur Miller's *Crucible*, adapted by Jean-Paul Sartre. With Yves Montand and Simone Signoret.

Great Britain

Powell-Pressburger : *Battle of the River Plate*, with Peter Finch. (VistaVision : Technicolor.)

John Boulting : *Private's Progress*, an army comedy with Richard Attenborough.

Lewis Gilbert : *Reach for the Sky*, from Paul Brickhill's biography of Douglas Bader, with Kenneth More and Muriel Pavlow.

Underneath the Oscar : Machiko Kyo (Star of "Rashomon" and "Gate of Hell") meets Marlon Brando, with whom she is to appear, as the geisha girl, in "Teahouse of the August Moon," directed by Daniel Mann. Brando plays the interpreter : and Glenn Ford, Captain Fisby.



New Names

In the last ten years, about fifty new directors have attracted attention—in their own countries, at least; but films are slow to cross the barriers of language. From London, it is almost impossible to know who are the younger talents in Italy or Japan, Mexico or Russia; unless their films make an instant success, it is the work of more established directors which will be exported. So we feel it may be of interest to sketch in the personalities of these new filmmakers.

This series of new names begins with Italy; from which, with de Sica, Visconti and Rossellini,

came the first postwar revelation. The ages of the eight directors mentioned here range from 25 to 43; their styles are often widely different, though it is interesting to note how many are, in passing at least, linked by their contribution to *Amore in Citta*, that film journal conceived by Zavattini as a series of candid camera explorations of city life. The influence of Zavattini upon the Italian cinema remains, indeed, far-reaching. It may be direct, oblique or ironic; in some it is not constant or fixed; but, broadly, the young Italian cinema is agreed with Zavattini on the necessity of what he calls "social attention."

ANTONIONI



MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI. Born 1912. Began as critic; then assistant director, notably to Marcel Carné (*Les Visiteurs du Soir*), and scriptwriter—one of several on de Santis' *Caccia Tragica*. His first films were documentaries, a study of the Po valley, *Gente del Po* (1947), and *N.U.* (1949), mordantly focused on an unexpected corner of urban life, street-cleaning. A sharp, ironic personality was already evident in these short films. In 1950 his first feature, *Cronaca di un Amore*, a wryly elegant love story with an atmospheric Milan setting; affair between a



rich married woman and a man socially inferior. His next films, *I Vinti* (1952), three sketches of juvenile delinquents in Italy, France and England, and *La Signora Senza Camelie* (1953), about a husband's attempts to launch his beautiful wife as a film star, were less successful. Then his contribution to *Amore in Citta* (1953), a sketch on a suicide pact and, above all,

Le Amiche (1955), awarded a Silver Lion at the Venice Festival, showed a return to form. *Le Amiche* (above), so far, is Antonioni's consummation. To a bitter comedy of manners with a Turin setting he brings dispassionate penetration, acute and subtle irony. He is essentially a "city" director with a cool, probing, sophisticated style.

DE SETA



VITTORIO DE SETA. Born 1923. After studying architecture, entered films as assistant to Jean-Paul Le Chanois on *Village Magique*. In the last two years has made his mark as a documentarist of passion and fervour. *Isola di Fuoco* (1954), prized at Cannes, shot in panoramic process, precedes an exciting description of the eruption of Etna with a keen, sensitive account of the local peasant community. *Tempi di Pesci spata* (1954) (right), about sword-fishing, also in panoramic process, and *Contadini del Mare* (1955), again about fishermen, shot in CinemaScope, have a bold, striking use of colour, dramatic rhythm and cutting, and imaginative feeling for the ritual of the subject (a soundtrack making use of traditional

chants and cries). Two films about Sicily, his birthplace, emphasise his understanding of peasant life, folk customs, and have a vigorous, powerful flavour.





EMMER

LUCIANO EMMER. Born 1918. Began, with Enrico Gras, alone and uninfluenced, making art films in the early 40's, notably a *Giotto* (1943); seeking, as he later said, not to teach or theorise, but to discover how the camera might imaginatively respond to painting. *Leggenda di S. Orsola*, on Carpaccio, *Allegoria di Primavera*, on Botticelli, and *Paradiso Perduto*, on Hieronymus Bosch, in 1948-49. Also, with Gras, two magically evocative films on Venice, *Romantici a Venezia* and *Isola nella Laguna*. Then his first feature, *Domenica d'Agosto* (1950), comedy about a Roman pleasure beach in the neo-realist style. Freshness declined into formula with subsequent features—*Parigi e sempre Parigi* (1952), *Ragazze di piazza di Spagna* (1953), and one began to regret abandonment of what he called the "slightly romantic and decadent" approach of his Venice films. The vitality, by contrast, of his *Picasso* (1954), suggested that his particular gifts find their best expression in the art film.



FELLINI

FEDERICO FELLINI. Began as scriptwriter for Lattuada (*Senza Pietà, Mulino del Po*) and Rossellini (*Open City, Paisà, Miracolo*). Collaborated with Lattuada on script and direction of *Luci del Varietà* (1950), satirical comedy about music-hall artists. At first one thought Lattuada had discovered a new style, but Fellini's first two solo films, *The White Sheik* (1952) and *I Vitelloni* (1953), and his contribution to *Amore in Città*, made clear the source of individuality. *I Vitelloni*, particularly, a study of well-to-do young wastrels in a provincial town, with some incisive humour and atmosphere, promised an interesting new talent. Since these films, he has followed a less rewarding path—*La Strada* (1954) and *Il Bidone* (1955)—to a strained, uneasy combination of "poetry" and melodrama. Clever, inventive, Fellini seems at present adrift with his own facility. Will he commit, and find, himself?

LIZZANI

CARLO LIZZANI. Born 1922. Began as critic, a function which he still intermittently exercises; recently wrote a short book on the Italian cinema. As film-maker, after documentaries and contribution to *Amore in Città*, showed his hand with *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* (1954), awarded a prize at Cannes. Based on Pratolini's novel of political tensions in Florence during the 20's, it showed solid Left-wing sympathies and an aroused conscience. Has just completed *Lo Svitato*, a comedy about journalists and their methods. One of the most prominent younger "engaged" directors, who believes with Zavattini in the moral responsibility of neo-realism.

GIUSEPPE DE SANTIS. Born 1917. Also came to features by way of criticism and documentaries. Assistant to Visconti on *Ossessione* (1943), then collaborated with Aldo Vergano on *Il Sole Sorge Ancora* (1946), interesting film about an Italian village under German occupation. His first feature, *Caccia Tragica* (below), melodrama about exploited peasants, showed dangerous virtuosity; influences

ranging from Eisenstein to the American thriller. A tendency towards brilliant sensationalism became more marked, unfortunately, in succeeding films—*Riso Amaro* (exploited rice girls), *Roma Ore II* (staircase collapses on 200 would-be secretaries). But with *Giorni d'Amore* (1955), simple love story of two peasants, shot in colour, is said to have made his best, most freshly conceived film.

DE SANTIS





MASELLI

FRANCESCO MASELLI. Born 1930. Was making documentaries at the age of sixteen; his *Bambini* (1950) is a tender account of city children's games. Then worked on scripts, notably for Antonioni's *Signora senza Camelie*. Co-directed with Zavattini the "Caterina" episode of *Amore in Citta*, about a woman who abandons her baby, and at the age of 24 undertook his first film, *Gli Sbandati* (right), awarded a special mention at Venice. This drama of reactions in an idle aristocratic country household to the realities of war showed an original, reflective talent; like Lizzani, Maselli is an adherent of Zavattini, but his style is more immediately personal. *Gli Sbandati* promises much.



ROSSI

FRANCO ROSSI. Born 1919. An outsider whose *Amici per le Pelle* (1955) (below), seems to have astonished everyone. Began as assistant director, notably to Castellani (*E'Primavera*), then became dubbing director, then left the cinema for radio, where he established a reputation as imaginative producer of plays. Returning to the cinema in 1952 as director, his first two films had unrewarding subjects; but *Il Seduttore* (1954), about a timorous man who can never reconcile his extravagant amorous fantasies with reality, was a comedy of some distinction. *Amici per le Pelle*, a beautifully observed study of the relationship between two schoolboys, is

remarkable even in these days of extraordinary films about children; it is an excitingly intuitive film, and it takes one inside the world of childhood.





The World of CARL DREYER

**by
Boerge
Trolle**

Inquisitor : " Leaves from Satan's Book "

MUCH expectation had been aroused in 1954 by the news that Carl Dreyer was once more at work, this time on a film based upon the play *Ordet* (*The Word*) by the celebrated Danish dramatist Kaj Munk, a parson from Jutland who was murdered by the Nazis in 1944 because of his patriotic writing and preaching. On January 10, 1955, the première took place in Dreyer's own cinema, the Dagmar Bio, in Copenhagen. It was then almost twelve years since Danish cinema audiences had had the opportunity to become acquainted with a Dreyer film—*Day of Wrath*¹.

But in contrast to *Day of Wrath*, which was practically torn to pieces by most Danish critics in 1943, and first won appreciation after being shown outside Denmark at the end of the war, *The Word* has been received in its native country with an almost unreserved enthusiasm. And, in fact, this is in itself rather suspect, since neither the standard of Danish film criticism nor the taste of Danish filmgoers seems to have changed much since 1943. Among admirers of Dreyer's work, who earlier defended him against criticism which seemed to them injudicious, *The Word* has been accepted only with considerable reservations and has appeared almost as a disappointment.

This seems to be an occasion (particularly since the Golden Lion at the 1955 Venice Festival was awarded to the life and work of its director as well as to *The Word* itself) when a complete analysis of Dreyer's creative work is necessary. If you wish to find out why *The Word* does not attain the artistic level of most of his previous films, you must consider it in relation to his work as a whole. And you will search in vain for an analysis. Ebbe Neergaard's excellent biography² concentrates upon descriptions of the films, and especially of Dreyer's working methods—the Danish title “The Work of a Film Director” exactly hits off its intentions—and touches only once or twice upon artistic appraisal. Particular aspects of Dreyer's work have also been occasionally discussed. The complete analysis, though, is still missing. Without any pretensions towards being exhaustive, this article attempts in part to fill this vacuum.

II

Carl Theodor Dreyer occupies a unique place in the cinema. In the Danish cinema he is not only second to none but also stands alone, bearing no resemblance to any other Danish director. And even on an international scale there appears to be only one living director who can in any way be compared with him: Robert Bresson. The similarities between Dreyer and Bresson are surprising, but curiously enough they do not seem to have been influenced one by another, each having arrived at his unique methods of expression by an independent route.

Dreyer, however, does not occupy a wholly isolated position in the history of the cinema. (This could rather be applied to Bresson, if he did not have Dreyer to relate to.) As early as 1920, Dreyer was the first Scandinavian director to introduce Griffith's principles



Martyr : Falconetti in “La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc”

of editing, in *Leaves from Satan's Book*, together with an expressive close-up technique also similar to that of Griffith. His next film, *The Parson's Widow* (1921, for Svensk Filmindustri), was clearly influenced by the lyrical-naturalistic style of Sjöström and Stiller. The vast concentration of emotional material in Dreyer's pictures, together with the cohesion of scenery and plot—and this you will find in almost all of them—inevitably provokes reference to von Stroheim. *Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) and *Vampyr* (1932) are commonly recognised as outrunners of the French *avant garde* film style, and link Dreyer with such directors as René Clair and Jean Epstein. Among the younger French directors, Dreyer himself has often claimed Marcel Carné as one of whose work he has taken notice, as well as the Italian neo-realist Vittorio de Sica. The Swedish critic Gerd Osten has compared Dreyer to Alf Sjöberg, and I would like on my own account to point to Eisenstein (especially in *The General Line*) and to Luis Bunuel as directors having something in common with Dreyer. (I am convinced, though, that Dreyer himself is unconscious of these latter resemblances.) In any case, this enumeration clearly reveals the extent, and the stature, of Dreyer's talent.

One of the greatest of living film directors, Dreyer is commonly recognised as such everywhere except perhaps in his own country. But to a certain extent this may be due to the fact that he has no real connection with the Danish cinema. No doubt he has influenced it at certain points, but he is definitely not “at home” in it³.

III

What are Dreyer's particular characteristics? The question is difficult to answer briefly, for Dreyer is complex. To describe him as a profoundly psychological

¹ The film Dreyer made in Sweden in 1945, *Två Mäniskor* (*Two People*) was a failure and was never publicly shown in Denmark.

² Ebbe Neergaard: *En filminstruktörs arbete*. Atheneum, Copenhagen, 1940. Revised English edition: *Carl Dreyer*. British Film Institute New Index Series, No. 1, 1950.

³ The Swedish critic Gerd Osten, for instance, in her book *Nordisk Film* (*Scandinavian Film*), does not mention Dreyer in the chapter on the Danish cinema, but quite logically in connection with Alf Sjöberg and Ingmar Bergman.

director would arouse little protest, but is far from being exhaustive since his psychological method is in itself unique and exceptional. His genius appears in his desire to reach the limit of human feelings, the unsounded depths of the soul, the nooks and crannies of the human subconscious where fear and deliverance, martyrdom and triumph, struggle in incessant, unending antagonism. This conflict, which human beings, according to Dreyer's conception of them, must endure in complete isolation, is the major theme in all his films. And for this reason they are rarely what they may appear to be on the surface: superficially they are dealing with other themes. Moreover, although Dreyer's art is predominantly an experimental one, he is not a director who utilises the full resources of film technique in a single picture. He limits himself to only a few of these resources, and employs them consistently throughout a film in a manner which often shocks the audience—and generally induces weariness in the untrained filmgoer. He is one-sided in his choice of subjects, and he keeps within certain limits in handling them; but this is precisely why he has been able to concentrate his full artistic power on these restricted themes, so that plot and characters, surroundings and decor, tempo and rhythm, have been indissolubly welded into a monumental whole.

The relationship between Dreyer and his actors has often been discussed, by himself as well as by others, and some people believe that this may be the key to his particular qualities. The explanation is understandable but hardly conclusive. It may, however, lead towards the crux of the

matter, and so provides a useful starting point.

Dreyer has publicly confirmed—in, for instance, a lecture given at the Danish Students' League in Copenhagen on December 1, 1943—that he is a supporter of Stanislavsky and his "System." He said:—

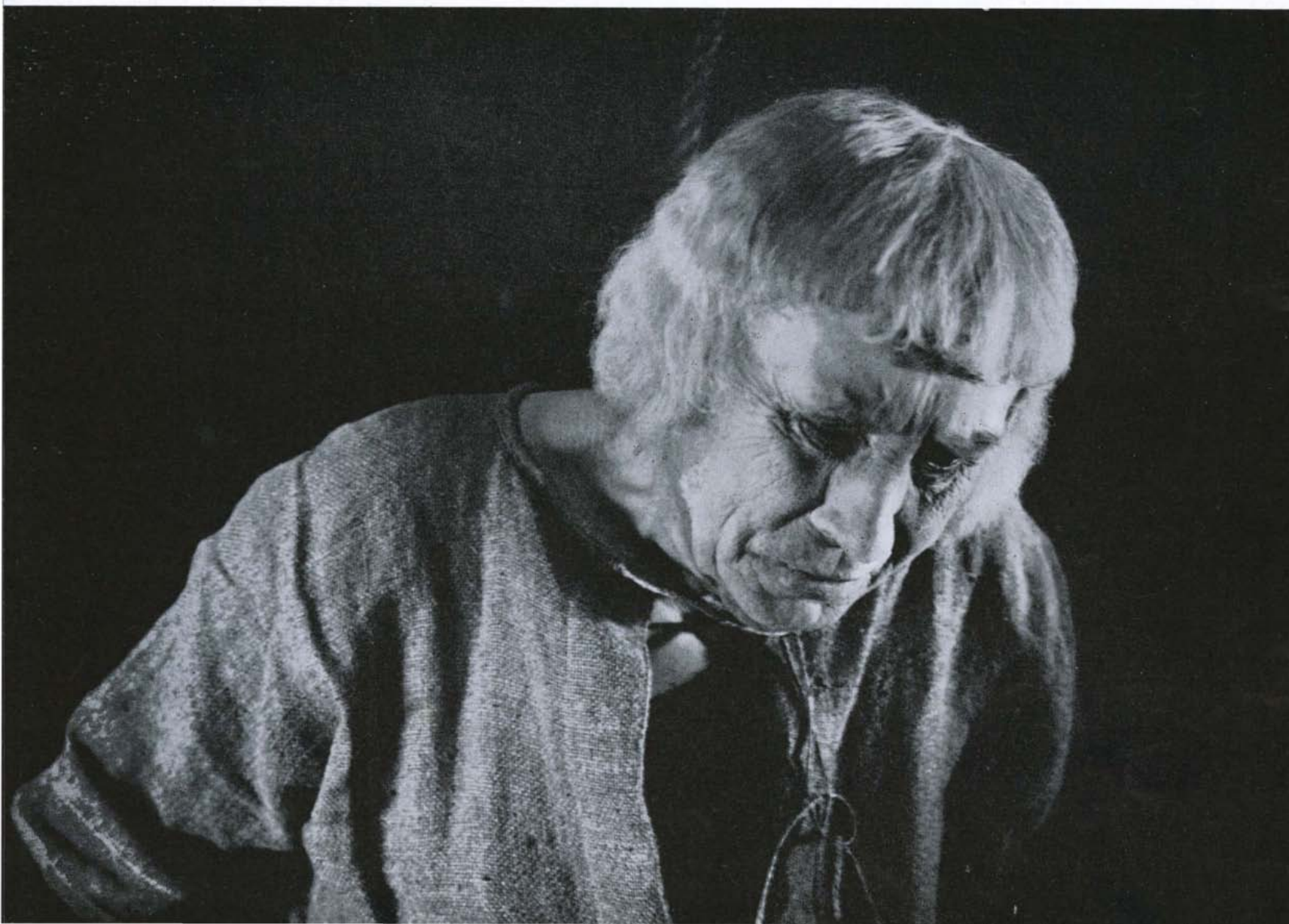
"No actor is able to create real and true feelings to order, because you cannot extort feelings, they must appear from within . . . If he succeeds, the true expression appears spontaneously."

That is why *" . . . an actor must never start from the outside with the expression but from the inside with the emotion . . . in every scene there is but one expression which is really true, a single one only ! "*

These words were spoken by Dreyer: they could as well have been spoken by Stanislavsky himself.

It is evident that Stanislavsky's system can also be profitable for screen actors; and the Russians themselves have accepted these ideas since the early 'twenties, endeavouring to accommodate them to the demands of the cinema. Pudovkin was a pioneer in this field, and no doubt Dreyer has studied his essays. Pudovkin tells how Stanislavsky's theatrical work confronted him with problems to which only the art of the cinema could offer a satisfactory solution. This became sufficiently apparent through Stanislavsky's experiments with "Studio One" at the Arts Theatre, a tiny experimental stage so small that the audience was almost on top of the actors. Owing to this close contact between audience and players, every half-tone and subtle nuance acquired extreme importance. In fact, the "close-up" of the cinema was here making

Martyr : " Leaves from Satan's Book "



its appearance, and the jump from "Studio One" to the cinema is a short one. By means of a close shot, intimacy may be raised to a point at which the audience is placed face to face, even eye to eye, with the performers. Stanislavsky's theory about the "Interior Circle"—i.e., the actor must be conscious only of things and persons very close to him—takes on decisive importance in the cinema. But at the same time the cinema postulates new requirements: the human types must be absolutely true, and therefore the actor may very well be replaced by the "man in the street"; and in the same way surroundings and decor must be real, although this does not automatically mean that they must be naturalistic.

It is worth noting Dreyer's anticipation of these factors which later came to dominate Russian film theory and practice. As early as 1920, he used "real people" as extras in his first film, *The President*; and in the following year, while shooting *The Parson's Widow* in Sweden, he worked on location at a time when films were as a rule shot almost entirely in the studios. This "real" cast and "true" decor did not, however, lead him towards naturalistic films, but served only to establish the background and atmosphere around the players and, at the same time, to influence them. In the studio Dreyer favours the "closed set": every disturbing factor must be shut out, the actors must completely penetrate his world and be absorbed into it. In this way he develops the theories of Stanislavsky; settings are used for their effect on the players as well as the audience. In fact, backgrounds and decor, sets and costumes, even the actors playing together, are only subordinate factors to Dreyer, necessary to get the plot under way, but destined gradually to fall away, to be absorbed, when Dreyer approaches the real objective of his art: the human being facing loneliness and fear, isolated from his fellow creatures and from the outside world, his soul laid bare. It is only in this situation that Dreyer's especial genius corrosively imposes itself: our exposed nerves are attacked, and a sense of infinite loneliness chills us like an icy breath from the screen. Then, in front of us, the miracle happens. The empty space teems with life; everything that flourishes in loneliness and isolation—fear and liberation, fate and doubt, suffering and release—is unfolded on the screen, and the lacerated, heart-broken individual revives, becomes purified and true.

So the particular characteristics of Dreyer's art may be expressed in a dialectical formula: a human being, in his natural surroundings, must be completely atomized as a condition of rebirth. Dreyer's genius is founded on the fact that his art really begins to unfold itself at just the point where most other directors have to give way, simply because they have exhausted their material. Through the medium of the cinema, Dreyer has repeatedly described phenomena generally regarded as impossible to represent, has exposed unsounded depths in the soul.

IV

The complex of problems out of which Dreyer's work has been created, and by which it is nourished, is deeply founded in the social-psychological transformation of man which began with the breaking up of the feudal system and the incipient emergence of capitalism: a historical period covering about 500 years, encompassing such events as crusades and Jew-baitings, burnings at the stake, inquisitions, religious wars and witchcraft trials. Today, after a few centuries of apparent tranquility and relaxation, social-psychological phenomena characteristic of the late Middle Ages seem to be reappearing, perhaps even in an intensified form. It is not wholly accidental that medieval subjects should, notably in the Anglo-Saxon countries, be playing an increasingly large part in contemporary literature and drama.

In the cinema Dreyer has explored this territory with an intensity that makes it dominate his entire work. The



Martyr: Anna Svierkier as the old woman burnt for witchcraft in "Day of Wrath"

Inquisition is one of the leading themes in *Leaves From Satan's Book*, while the subject of witchcraft makes its first appearance in *The Parson's Widow*. I have never seen *Love One Another* (1921), and there is very little information about this film, but it is known that it deals with the persecution of the Jews, with the martyrdom, that is, of the Jewish people. In *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Vampyr* and *Day of Wrath*, three pictures so closely related as almost to form a kind of trilogy, the themes of witchcraft and martyrdom emerge plainly into the open⁴. A film which Dreyer planned to make in Sweden, but which was never shot on account of the failure of *Two People*, would also have been constructed around the subject of vampirism⁵.

If you further connect fear of witches with erotic possession and sexual magic, as Dreyer undeniably does, you will finally encounter the subject also in *Mikael* (1924) and *Two People* (1945). Thus all of Dreyer's important works appear solidly based on a common foundation, rooted psychologically in the late Middle Ages and in the Calvinism and Anglo-Saxon Puritanism that were the extreme religious consequences of this epoch. The dominating doctrine here is a belief in predestination, in a predetermined and inevitable

⁴ It is all the same if you choose to interpret Jeanne as some sort of holy witch or Anne as a martyr (of love). Dreyer's conceptions of witch and martyr are completely interwoven.

⁵ The idea was based on the play *They Walk Alone* by Max Catto, which was later used in the film *Daughter of Darkness*, directed by Lance Comfort.

grace or perdition. It is a doctrine which suggests the triumph of the death wish over the affirmation of life. But, as the affirmation of life cannot be decisively expelled from human beings, it is carried on in the female. In accordance with the Puritan conception, no woman is entirely free from original sin—i.e., all women are *a priori* potential witches. The unending conflict between the sexes is only the outward indication of a conflict between the death-instinct of the male and the life-affirmation of the female. In Christopher Fry's play *The Lady's Not for Burning*, you will again find the subject plainly set out, with its implications of Puritanism and an openly admitted witchcraft theme. The woman, Jennet, is dangerous (i.e., a witch) because she is different from others, a woman with both thoughts and feelings, characterising herself as follows: "My father broke on the wheel of a dream; he was lost in a search. And so, for me, the actual! What I touch, what I see, what I know; the essential fact." The death-instinct of the man is unequivocally expressed in his literal wish to be hanged. But even if the man is not hanged and the lady is not burned, and the struggle between the sexes is over for a while, the play ends with the words, "And God have mercy on our souls," spoken by the man. Sooner or later the battle will be joined again.

If, finally, you interpret the "witch problem" as a reflection of the eternal struggle in Western culture between the death-instinct of the male and the life-affirmation of the female, you may define "Mads" (the old nanny, played by Mathilde Nielsen) in the film *Master of the House* (1925), as some sort of symbol of the matriarchy, who at last defeats the tyrannical, selfish and destructive patriarchy. In this way the film—the only one of any importance not already mentioned—may be linked with Dreyer's other work. Omitted are only *Once Upon a Time* (1922) and *The Bride of Glomdale* (1926), commonly recognised respectively as a miscalculation and a little intermezzo.

The fact that a certain theme may be traced through every significant film made by Dreyer indicates that he is himself, in one way or another, intensely engaged in the conflict. The personal reasons are nobody's business but his own; we are concerned with this issue in so far as Dreyer has, through the cinema, been able to project it as a reflection of some general conflicts. And in this projection he seems to have confronted one of the cardinal issues at the base of modern civilisation: the conflict between humanism and puritanism. (In modern terms: democracy and dictatorship.) That Dreyer's work has its origins in a sincere humanism is beyond discussion; his sympathy is certainly on the side of life, and the female characters therefore play the major part in his films. But to all appearances they can, nevertheless, be cleansed only through suffering, they can attain authentic purity only through martyrdom. Only when they are brought face to face with death, abandoned and betrayed by everyone, do they appear undisguised and purified on the screen, encircled by our (and Dreyer's) undivided sympathy. Does the puritan death-wish finally affect Dreyer himself? And is the Swedish critic Gerd Osten right when, interpreting Dreyer's work in psychoanalytical terms, she puts forward the suggestion that the fear of women plays a much more important part in it than has previously been assumed? This assertion cannot be simply rejected. At any rate it is an established fact that there are antagonisms in Dreyer's own mind which reflect essential problems of contemporary society. And that is why his art concerns all of us.

V

Dreyer has on occasion been described as the Kafka of the cinema. Both artists are devoted to bizarre and exceptional settings, both are outspoken in their anti-realism. And the mental conflicts which motivate their art evidently rest upon a common foundation. In a review of *The Word* in *Kosmorama*, the magazine of the Danish film museum, Erich Ulrichsen has also put forward—in connection with Kafka—the names of

Edgar Allan Poe, Pierre Andrezel, Guy Endore and Walter de la Mare as writers who may perhaps have acted as sources of inspiration for Dreyer; and I believe he is right. Against this background, the name of Kaj Munk, introduced in connection with Carl Dreyer, immediately appears suspect.

It is true that Munk is not specifically a realist, but neither is he an anti-realist. (If you wish to classify him, the only word is "Theatricalist," a term precisely as impossible as the "Rethatricalisation of the Theatre" his dramas have given rise to.) He exploits theatrical and dramatic techniques with considerable skill, managing successfully to combine different styles. And although *The Word* occupies an isolated position in Munk's work, it is no exception to this rule. Technically it belongs to the realistic school, with some obvious influences from Ibsen—particularly in the analysis of a feud between two families, the Borgens and the Skraedders, of opposed religious beliefs. Imaginatively it is anti-naturalistic; its climax is the purification of the tormented Johannes through the "resurrection" of Inger Borgen after she has been several hours in her coffin; there are occasional suggestions of Maeterlinck's minor masterpiece *L'Intruse*. It cannot be doubted, though, that the play owes its undeniable theatrical effectiveness primarily to its firm structure and impeccable dramatic organisation. The strong impression that *The Word* made on Dreyer, when he saw it on the first night at the Betty Nansen theatre in Copenhagen in 1932, was probably due to its anti-naturalistic intentions.

Might this element of dualism in Munk's work have afforded particular opportunities to Dreyer? It does not seem improbable, but it simply did not happen. And it did not happen because Dreyer, with his respect for Munk's work, has preserved the entire realistic setting of the play. Such respect deserves credit at a time when novels and plays are almost every day destroyed and unjustifiably altered beyond recognition in the common run of film production. In the case of *The Word*, though, it has led Dreyer into a blind alley, leaving his characteristic cinematic genius no chance to express itself. At the same time, Dreyer's inability to express himself in realistic terms has muffled Munk's dramatic genius.

The Word has been filmed previously (by Svensk Filmindustri in 1943), directed by Gustav Molander and scripted by Rune Lindström, who also played the part of Johannes. The Swedish film was in many respects a free adaptation, since it was transferred to a Swedish setting and the characters were to some extent reshaped. Molander, however, was faithful to his author in that the realistic technique and strict dramatic form of the original were preserved. Realism, in fact, was carried to a point at which the play's climax—the resurrection—was given an obvious symbolic interpretation. During a period of religious scruples, Johannes has suffered a psychic shock, the result of blaming himself for the accidental death of his fiancée. His feelings of guilt and remorse drive him into a state of neurotic insanity. Through the death of Inger (played by Wanda Rothgard) he is confronted with the situation once more—violently accentuated by the barbaric burial customs, probably of pagan origin, which still survive in the remote villages of Halland—and is cured and restored to sanity. In Molander's interpretation, the resurrection of the woman clearly symbolises the resurrection of the nature and intellect of Johannes. In this way, the miracle of Kaj Munk has been interpreted as a return to sanity, capable of scientific explanation but nevertheless appearing miraculous to those directly in contact with it.

The justice of this has been discussed, and will go on being discussed. It cannot be rejected out of hand as a possible interpretation, although it is hardly quite in accordance with Munk's intentions. On the other hand, it is precisely the result of the film's straightforward and realistic style; and in this way the external realism of Molander's film has involved a considerable weakening of the play's anti-realistic purpose.



Vampire : Henriette Gerard as "the old woman from the churchyard" in "*Vampyr*"

In Carl Dreyer's version, no such interpretative attitude appears. Dreyer no doubt wants us to accept the miracle as a fact. With the help of Munk's rigid dramatic technique, he might perhaps have succeeded, although the screen presents problems and demands not encountered on the stage. Probably we would have found it easier to accept the situation in the unrealistic dream-world of *Vampyr*. As it stands, we certainly do not accept it, because neither possibility has been realised, and the miracle appears detached from the plot and characters of the play.

The character of Johannes has here been transformed into a caricature, a conventional "religious maniac" in no way resembling the figure conceived by Munk. The love story as the cause of his mental illness has completely disappeared : he has now gone out of his mind through reading Soeren Kirkegaard. The nature of his insanity also seems far removed from the playwright's purpose. He is, in fact, very far from being "close to God" (i.e., close to the spontaneous and primitive human mind, as some insane persons may be). The children's confidence in him is absurd ; they would unhesitatingly fear and avoid a man who does not even look at them while he is talking. The conflict of religious beliefs between the two families also becomes less interesting. The old Mikkel Borgen (inexplicably renamed Morten) hardly matches Munk's conception of a "Gruntvigian" chieftain ; while Peter Skraedder, his counterpart from the "Interior Mission," whom Munk conceived as a hypocrite, has been whitewashed by Dreyer⁶. This last modification, notably, reflects a difference in sentiment which must necessarily influence the total impression of the film.

Dreyer's attention is most richly concentrated on young Mikkel Borgen, the husband of Inger, played by Emil Hass Christensen (previously a rather obscure and neglected actor), who triumphs under his direction, and gives a performance of notable power. Brought face to face with the

absurdity of death, an uncomplicated human being full of the joy of life will react exactly as he does. This character at last makes us feel the presence of a human being, isolated and suffering, on the point of breaking through the atmosphere of hypocrisy and religious sophistry. Throughout the scene of his collapse by the coffin of his wife, with its strange, almost unearthly photographic texture reminiscent of *Day of Wrath* and *Vampyr*, one has momentary reminders of Dreyer's former genius.

From this point of view, though, Dreyer is left with no possibility of further expanding the plot. Emphasis has to return to the unpalatable Johannes, the character to be made whole again by the miracle. But the level of the conception here means that the miracle acts only as a kind of supernatural shock treatment on a maniac. The pre-determined course of miracle, resurrection and conversion cannot be altered without putting Kaj Munk's work aside. This very tangible miracle carries no conviction whatsoever, because it is unable to bring true deliverance or release in any form.

The plays of Kaj Munk were, like Dreyer's films, created out of a divided and sceptical mind. I think that Ernest Frandsen, the Danish professor of literature, is right in claiming that Munk's personal problem is the question of how far human existence as a whole can be justified and made meaningful by individual capacity for endurance, development, self-fulfilment. In a little play called *The King and the Cardinal* (1930), he put this question directly through the character of Richelieu. Again and again he had to quell it with the No of Christendom. But the constant reappearance of the question in his work shows that his doubts persisted.

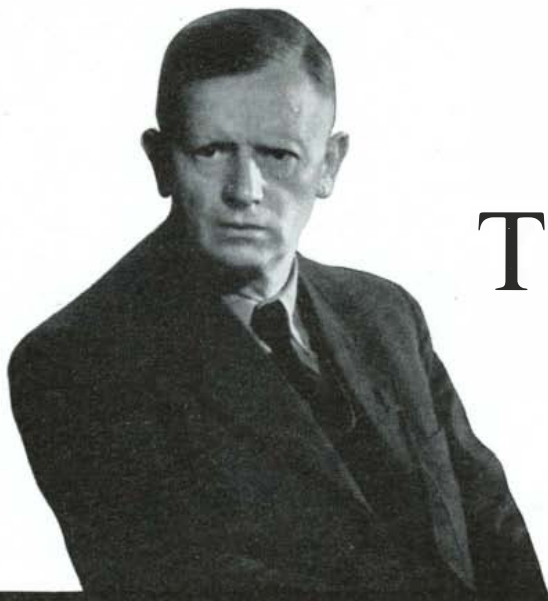
For Dreyer, though, the doubt has never existed. Not for a single moment has he questioned the inevitability of suffering as a means towards purity and revelation. The human beings in his films fail again and again, as a consequence of some human imperfection, even when they believe themselves to be acting on God's command. To Dreyer, individual self-sufficiency is an absurdity. One may doubt, therefore, whether the attitudes of these two very distinctive artists could ever have been successfully combined, and perhaps this inner dissension is the chief reason for the failure of *The Word* to reach the level of Dreyer's best films.

Finally, one recalls Dreyer's remark, on several occasions, that he is always more interested in his next picture ; and whatever one thinks of his previous film, one will always agree with him.

Inquisitors : "Day of Wrath"



⁶ Gruntvigianism and "Interior Mission" (Indre Mission) are the principal tendencies within the Danish church. The viewpoint of the first is moderate, of the second dark and severe.



Thoughts on my craft

CARL DREYER

I AM not a film theorist. I am only a film director, and proud of my craft. But a craftsman also gets his own ideas during his work.

I have nothing revolutionary to say. I do not believe in revolutions. They very often push development backwards. I am more inclined to believe in *evolution*, in the small step forward.

So I shall limit myself to saying that the film has possibilities of artistic renewal from *inside*. Human beings dislike being taken off the beaten track. They have got used by now to the correct photographic reproduction of reality, they enjoy recognising what they already know. When the camera appeared it won a quick victory, because in a mechanical objective way it could register the impressions of the human eye. So far this capacity has been the strength of the film, but for works of art it is becoming a weakness that must be fought.

We have got stuck with photography. We are now confronted with the necessity of freeing ourselves from it. We must use the camera to drive away the camera.

Photography as a means of reporting, of sightseeing, has compelled the film to remain with its feet on the ground. We have to wrench the film out of the embrace of naturalism. We have to tell ourselves it is a waste of time to copy reality. We must use the camera to create a new language of style, a new artistic form.



But first of all we have to understand what we mean by "art" and "style." The Danish writer, Johannes V. Jensen defines art as a "spiritually interpreted form," a definition that seems to me perfect. Chesterfield considers style to be "the dress of thoughts," another simple and precise definition, provided that the dress is not too conspicuous. The characteristic of a good style, itself simple and precise too, must be that it enters into such intimate contact with the material that it forms a *synthesis*. If it is too pushing, if it tries to attract attention, it is no longer style but mannerism.

I would define style as the form in which artistic inspiration expresses itself. We recognise the style of an artist in certain features characteristic of him personally, which reflect his nature and his outlook.

The style of a film that is a work of art results from many different components, such as the effect of rhythm and composition, the mutual tension of colour surfaces, the interaction of light and shadow, the gliding rhythm of the camera. All these things, combined with the director's conception of his material as something that can be expressed in terms of creative film, decide his style. If he confines himself to the soulless impersonal photography of what his

eyes can perceive, he has no style. If he uses his mind to transfer what his eyes can see into a vision, if he builds up his film in accordance with this vision, disregarding the reality that inspired it, then his work will bear the sacred stamp of inspiration. Then the film has a style.

The director is the man who must leave his hallmark on a film that is a work of art. This does not involve underestimating the poet's share; but even if the poet is Shakespeare, the literary idea in itself will not make the film a work of art. The director, creatively inspired by the poet's material, is necessary for this.

I do not underestimate, either, the team work of cameramen, colour technicians, designers and so on; but, within this collective, the director must remain the prime, inspiring power, the man behind the work, who makes us listen to the poet's words and who makes feelings and passions flare so that we are moved and touched.

This is my conception of the director's importance—and *responsibility*.



How can we define the film that is a work of art? First, let us ask what other art form is most closely related to films. In my opinion it must be architecture, which is the most perfect art form because it is not an imitation of nature, but a pure product of human imagination.

In all noble architecture the details are so finely balanced and harmonised as to fit in with the whole. No detail, however small, can be changed without giving the impression of a flaw in the harmony. (In a badly designed house, all measures and proportions are haphazard, variable.) Something similar applies to films. Only when *all* the artistic elements of a film have been welded together so firmly that no single unit can be left out or changed without damaging the whole, only then can the film be compared to a piece of architectural art. Films which do not satisfy this demand are like those conventional, uninspired houses that one passes by without even noticing.

In the architectural film the director takes over the role of architect.



Where is the possibility of artistic renewal in the cinema? I can only answer for myself, and I can see only one way: *abstraction*. In order not to be misunderstood, I must at once define abstraction as something that demands of the artist to abstract himself from reality in order to strengthen the spiritual content of his work.

More concisely: the artist must describe inner, not outer life. The capacity to abstract is essential to all artistic

creation. Abstraction allows the director to get outside the fence with which naturalism has surrounded his medium. It allows his films to be not merely visual, but spiritual. The director must share his own artistic and spiritual experiences with the audience. Abstraction will give him a chance of doing it, of replacing objective reality with his own subjective interpretation.

This means that we must find some new creative principles. I would like to stress that I am thinking merely of the image. People think in images, and images are the primary factor of a film.

The closest road at hand is the road of simplification. Every creative artist is confronted by the same task. He must be inspired by reality, then move away from it in order to give his work the form provoked by his inspiration. The director must be free to transform reality so that it becomes consistent with the inspired, simplified image left in his mind. Reality must obey the director's aesthetic sense.

To make the form more evident, more striking, simplification must cleanse the director's inspiration of all elements that do not support his central idea. It must transform the idea into a symbol. With symbolism we are well on the way to abstraction, for symbolism works through suggestion.

This abstraction through simplification, so that a purified form emerges in a kind of timeless, psychological realism, can be practised by the director in a modest way in the actual rooms of his films. How many rooms without souls we have seen on the screen. . . . The director can give his rooms a soul through simplification, by removing all that is superfluous, by making a few significant articles and objects psychological witnesses of the inmate's personality.

Colour is a much more important means to obtain abstraction. Everything is possible with colour. But the colour film is still bound to the naturalistic chains of the black-and-white film. In the same way as French impressionists were

inspired by classical Japanese woodcuts, so Western film directors can learn from the beautiful Japanese film *Gate of Hell*. Here the colours actually fulfil their purpose. I believe that the Japanese themselves consider this film naturalistic : a historical reconstruction, but still naturalistic. Through our eyes its style tends towards the abstract. Only in one scene does pure naturalism break through, the scene of the tournament on the open plain. The style is broken for a few minutes, though we quickly forget the feeling of uneasiness it gives us.

The colours in *Gate of Hell* have undoubtedly been chosen to a well-prepared plan. The film tells us a great deal about warm and cold colours, about the use of profound simplification. It should encourage Western directors to use colour more deliberately and with greater boldness and imagination.

At present we are moving on cats' paws. We can throw in some pastel shades, pink and light blue, to show we have taste. But, as far as the abstract film goes, taste will not be nearly enough. Artistic intuition and courage is necessary to select and compose contrasting colours, to support the dramatic and psychological contents of a film. Colour offers the greatest possibility of artistic renewal in the cinema, and it is a pity that after twenty years one can remember only three or four films with colour that produced an aesthetic experience. And the best one has come from Japan. We can learn something from the Japanese.



There is another factor worth mentioning. Photography, of course, presumes an atmospheric perspective ; light and shadow fade towards the background. There may be an idea here to obtain interesting abstraction by deliberately eliminating atmospheric perspective, by giving up the much sought-after effects of depth and distance.

Instead, one should work towards an entirely new image-structure, one should plan one's colour surfaces so as to form one large, many-coloured surface. One should eliminate the conception of foreground, middle distance and background. It is possible that very remarkable aesthetic effects could be obtained in this way.



Abstraction may sound like a naughty word in the ears of film people. But I only want to point out that there is a world outside grey and boring naturalism : the world of imagination. Of course, the transformation must be made without the director losing grip on the world of reality. His remodelled reality must still be something the audience can recognise and believe in. It is very important for the first attempts at abstraction to be made with tact and discretion. People must not be shocked, they must be led along new roads slowly.

Should the attempt prove successful, enormous prospects open up. The film may never become three dimensional, but by means of abstraction it may be possible to introduce fourth and fifth dimensions.



A word about actors. Anyone who has seen my films—the good ones—will know how much importance I attach to performance. Nothing in the world can be compared to the human face. It is a land one can never tire of exploring. There is no greater experience in a studio than to witness the expression of a sensitive face under the mysterious power of inspiration. To see it animated from inside, and turning into poetry.

" Vampyr " : Rena Mandel



René Clair in Moscow



Meeting in Moscow : René Clair and Mark Donskoi

LAST October an official French Film Week was held in Moscow ; a reciprocal Russian Film Week occurred in Paris during December. Among the French films shown to an invited audience in Moscow were René Clair's *Les Grandes Manoeuvres*, Autant-Lara's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Carné's *Thérèse Raquin*, and Clouzot's *Le Salaire de la Peur*. The films were later shown in Leningrad and Kiev.

The French delegation, which visited Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev, included René Clair, Gérard Philipe, Danielle Darrieux, Nicole Courcel, the producer Raoul Ploquin, Robert Cravenne, director of Unifrance Film, and Jacques Flaud, head of the Centre National de la Cinématographie. One important result of the Film Week was an agreement for wider exchange of films between the two countries.

On his return from Russia, René Clair was interviewed by four members of the staff of "Paris-Presse L'Intransigeant," Max Favalelli, Claude Brulé, Jacques Garai and Robert Chazal. This translation, slightly abridged, appears by kind permission of the newspaper.

Q : First of all, what kind of public was there at the première of "Les Grandes Manoeuvres" in Moscow ?

A : It was an almost entirely invited public, I think.

Q : As for a Paris opening ?

A : With the addition of Soviet pomp and ceremony. I must explain that the Hotel Sovietskaya, where we stayed, is the George V of Moscow. It is part of a whole block that houses the Cinema Centre, and includes a projection theatre with seats for a thousand to twelve hundred people. . . .

Q : Do you think that the public, if not entirely composed of professional film people, was at any rate a very knowledgeable one ?

A : A generally privileged public. It's very difficult to judge people in Moscow by what they wear ; there were many intellectuals, quite ordinarily dressed. And some quite elegant women. Frenchwomen invited to the première had been asked to dress up as much as possible—they were all in evening gowns. But at the last moment the men were told not to wear evening suits.

Q : It would be interesting to know how the ordinary Russian public responds to French films ?

A : From what we know, very enthusiastically. I'm not speaking of their quality—which is perhaps the most important reason—but of a particular advantage we have. There are hardly any foreign films shown in Russia, and we treat subjects that Soviet directors don't touch.

Q : A priori, then, the public wants to be enthusiastic ?

A : It has great curiosity, too—curiosity only equalled by our own with regard to Russia.

Q : Did the contacts you made with film people there give you the impression—which many people had, for instance, after seeing "The Cicada" at Venice—that a new evolution is occurring in the Soviet cinema ? That it's beginning to abandon propagandist and social themes in favour of more personal ones ?

A : That would be part of a general evolution in Soviet Russia itself. But I can't, of course, pass judgment on the Soviet Union after only eight days there. From the extracts of new films that I saw, however, it's very possible.

Q : Though not very noticeable as yet ?

*A : I didn't see enough films to be able to say, but in Moscow we were shown three extracts ; one was called *The Lesson of Life*, and was extraordinarily interesting from the point of view of colour and technique. I think the Russians have a new emulsion that gives absolutely sensational results on exteriors. The most difficult problem in colour, you know, has been to arrive at a tonal equilibrium. . . . Now, what you can do in a studio—as in *Les Grandes Manoeuvres*—is calculated. You can relate the colour of the settings to the colour of the costumes ; but on exteriors we get a little lost—except, I must repeat, in *Les Grandes Manoeuvres*, where practically everything was reconstructed in the studio. For this reason I don't believe in so-called "contemporary" or realistic colour films, because they preclude proper colour control. A film which is not contemporary presupposes a degree of stylisation which can correspond to the stylisation of colour.*

The Lesson of Life is a contemporary film, and its main action passes, I presume, among construction work for huge dams or factories. The backgrounds are immense. It's shot on location, it's in colour, and it has resolved a colour problem that we have so far failed to resolve—by blending,

it seems to me, artificial light with sunlight.

The only explanation—I talked it over with Soviet colleagues—must be that they have evolved from Agfacolour a softer, which means a more rapid, emulsion. In any case it is extremely interesting, and we took pains to insist that the film should be exported to France.

Q : Did you have a special mission to fulfil in the U.S.S.R. ?

A : The general aim of our talks was to secure a fuller distribution of our films in Russia. The usual rate has been one per year—there's already been some progress, since five or six have now penetrated in the last six months. But obviously any arrangement must be reciprocal.

These talks will now be developed by people more qualified than I, but nearly everything we said revolved round this point : "You must take a little friendly advice on the films to send us. You must bear in mind differences in public taste. Except in a few cases, it won't be a very knowledgeable public that goes to see your films. The exceptions, who already go to subtitled foreign films, have by now understood the lessons you want to underline. . . . If you want your films to be successful in France, you must find more original subjects, and you must incidentally abandon your fairytale subjects—*Sadko* and so on. You must give us more realistic, more characteristic things."

For example, we saw at Mosfilm—almost by chance—a film set among the Khirgizes, called *Saltanat*. This was exciting for us, for it showed us Chinese faces of extraordinary beauty, charming and colourful costumes. And it was not picturesque in the usual sense. It showed us, for example, the Khirgize postman, who was a woman dressed in bright oriental costume. That kind of thing can succeed in Paris, because Paris has never seen anything like it. . . .

Q : You mentioned extracts from three films you had seen, with one in colour.

A : With a factory background, yes. But we also found, in another, an indication of that general evolution we were talking about earlier. I imagine there were some great constructivist themes in this film, but the last scene contained something very curious. The foreman, a tall good-looking boy, learns that the girl he loves is going away (I don't know the reason)—she's giving up her job, itself a rare event in a Soviet film. He takes a State car, consumes State petrol, to follow her. He catches up with her just as her boat is leaving. That's already something when you remember the rules that used to be laid down. . . .

Q : Two years ago, Youtkevich told me he hoped to make some romantic films, particularly for the foreign market, in which the kholkoze and all that would be soft-pedalled.

A : One must remember their problems. They are undoubtedly obliged to continue inculcating certain elementary truths for the society they want to build—a large part of which they've built already. They're obliged to teach



Moscow banquet : Gérard Philipe proposes a toast

these things to a population whose parents—not even grandparents—in some cases came out of the middle ages.

Q : Did you visit any studios ?

A : We visited Mosfilm in Moscow—the most important studio there. It was working to capacity, three films on the floor. We were shown round by Samsonov, who made *The Cicada*. I talked with another colleague, who's making a comedy, and saw some of it. It's from a late nineteenth century vaudeville play with, I think, no political theme. It's about travelling players.

Q : And technically ?

A : It's in colour, very pretty colour.

Q : And the studios ?

A : We asked not to visit any more—it's interesting to meet people, but studios, you know. . . . It's a little less luxurious in France and Moscow than in Hollywood, but it's always the same. . . . Nothing special about the studios. But I should add that Mosfilm has, at the moment, four or five stages—it's a big, fairly old studio. Our hosts showed us new stages that were almost finished, with all technical accessories. They looked very good, much more luxurious. They plan eleven stages in all.

Q : Did you have any opportunity of seeing three-dimensional films ?

A : No, nobody even talks about them. But they're quite interested in the enlarged screens—they showed us films in CinemaScope and I asked them why they wanted to imitate the Americans. They were a little embarrassed by the question.

We'd already seen the first experiments in CinemaScope in Moscow—very much like the way the Americans started. Documentaries and dance films, with a mild Hollywood influence in the dancing.

Q : What opinions did you gather of "Les Grandes Manoeuvres" ?

A : It was well received—in the press, admittedly—but I should say the public was a specialised one, and I couldn't base any conclusions on its reaction. Also, it was seeing a subtitled film, and was not used to this. Again, in a film like *Les Grandes Manoeuvres*, which has a good deal of dialogue, subtitles have to make great concessions from time to time, to translate the spirit rather than the letter of the scene. At one moment, in fact, I deliberately cut a piece of dialogue



Moscow banquet : René Clair proposes a toast



In Kiev : Dany Robin, Gérard Philipe, Danielle Darrieux.

because it seemed to me it was more interesting to watch Michèle Morgan's face.

As a whole the reception was admirable, with some interesting implications. There were two outbreaks of applause, one of which particularly interested me, because I was afraid, when they laughed at first, they would take the film too much as a comedy and be unprepared for the later dramatic twist. . . . So I was very reassured when they applauded the scene where Gérard returns to the raffish little cafe and doesn't say a word—he only whistles, while the girl, with her brief questions, first puts the idea into his head of marrying the woman he loves. There was a lot of applause at the end of this scene, which interested me very much, because it showed the audience appreciated the change of mood.

The case of *Fanfan la Tulipe*, which had already been shown in Russia, was different. It's an amusing film on a single level—and it had, besides, a fantastic success, Gérard is called Fanfan everywhere. All the same, even this film is difficult for a public not accustomed, one might say, to subtlety in general. . . .

Q : What were the reviews of "Les Grandes Manoeuvres" like ?

A : There was one very, very good one in *Litteratournaia Gazetta* the next day, by Romm, the director. After covering me with praise he made a slight reservation about the lightness of the subject. . . . In Leningrad, a very intelligent contributor to the same paper asked me for an interview, and we talked very freely. I said : "Romm's article is kind and flattering. He likes the film very much but I must draw your attention to his phrase, *the lightness of the subject*. We ought to understand each other here. For us, love is a very serious subject, not at all light." And I added : "It's been the same for you. Can you tell me what is the real, practical message of *Anna Karenina* ? There isn't one—only it's part of a tradition you have lost, a tradition I think you're going to find again." He was very interested by this. He said : "It's very likely." I'd like to know how he deals with it in his article.

Q : You're suggesting there may be a new romanticism ?

A : I believe there'll be a great romantic crisis in the U.S.S.R., if something important doesn't change. It's normal, one generation very often goes against the preceding one. They've been obliged to be so stakhanovist, so kholkoizian—they've had no choice, whatever you may think of their methods. Now, after a great effort, things are a little easier, and—God be praised—the cold war is less acute. Now they can turn back to romanticism. The book most in demand in Moscow is *Anna Karenina*. I firmly believe in an

explosion of romanticism, a return to the tradition of Tolstoy—a tradition that's lapsed due to the pressure of events.

Q : Did you have an official mission for the French cinema ? Was this delegation at once a prestige delegation and a commercially interested one ? Did you, personally — ?

A : Myself, nothing special—no more than the others. . . . But for Gérard Philipe, it was unimaginable. He should be nominated ambassador—the French Ambassador said so, by the way. He was astounded by what Gérard could do. In fact, at Leningrad, at the exit to the theatre, where our presence was not officially announced, we needed twelve agents to help us reach the coach—all because of Gérard. And for the coach to get away, we needed the mounted police.

It was like Max Linder's arrival in Russia in 1913. . . . We were extremely touched by everyone's kindness. There's really a spontaneity about those things that one can't mistake. For instance, I was coming out of the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad—we went round much too quickly, you need eight or ten days to see the whole fabulous collection, they have ten of the most beautiful Rembrandts in the world—and we reached our cars. At that moment there wasn't a big crowd—Gérard wasn't with us. I was stopped by two young people, who spoke French very nicely with a strong accent. One of them held out a large book, a beautifully bound book. I learned later they were two geology students. Seeing us leave, they ran to the bookshop, bought this book—which cost them a fortune—to make me a present. Simply, just like that. It's a magnificent book with reproductions of the Hermitage collection. . . . The other had nothing to give me, he brought me a carved stone from the Urals that he'd come across in his work. It's really overwhelming. This kind of thing happened all the time. . . .

I think they will create an astonishing youth. . . . There are still queues in front of the shops, but how could it be otherwise ? One must remember that, before the revolution, the population of Moscow was one and a half million ; after the revolution it dropped to eight hundred thousand ; but now it's nearly six million. Moscow is like Los Angeles—really, it's very, very American. The building work is fantastic—development in Los Angeles style. They start by making "highways," the great avenues for traffic ; there are still empty sites, but twenty-storey buildings are going up.

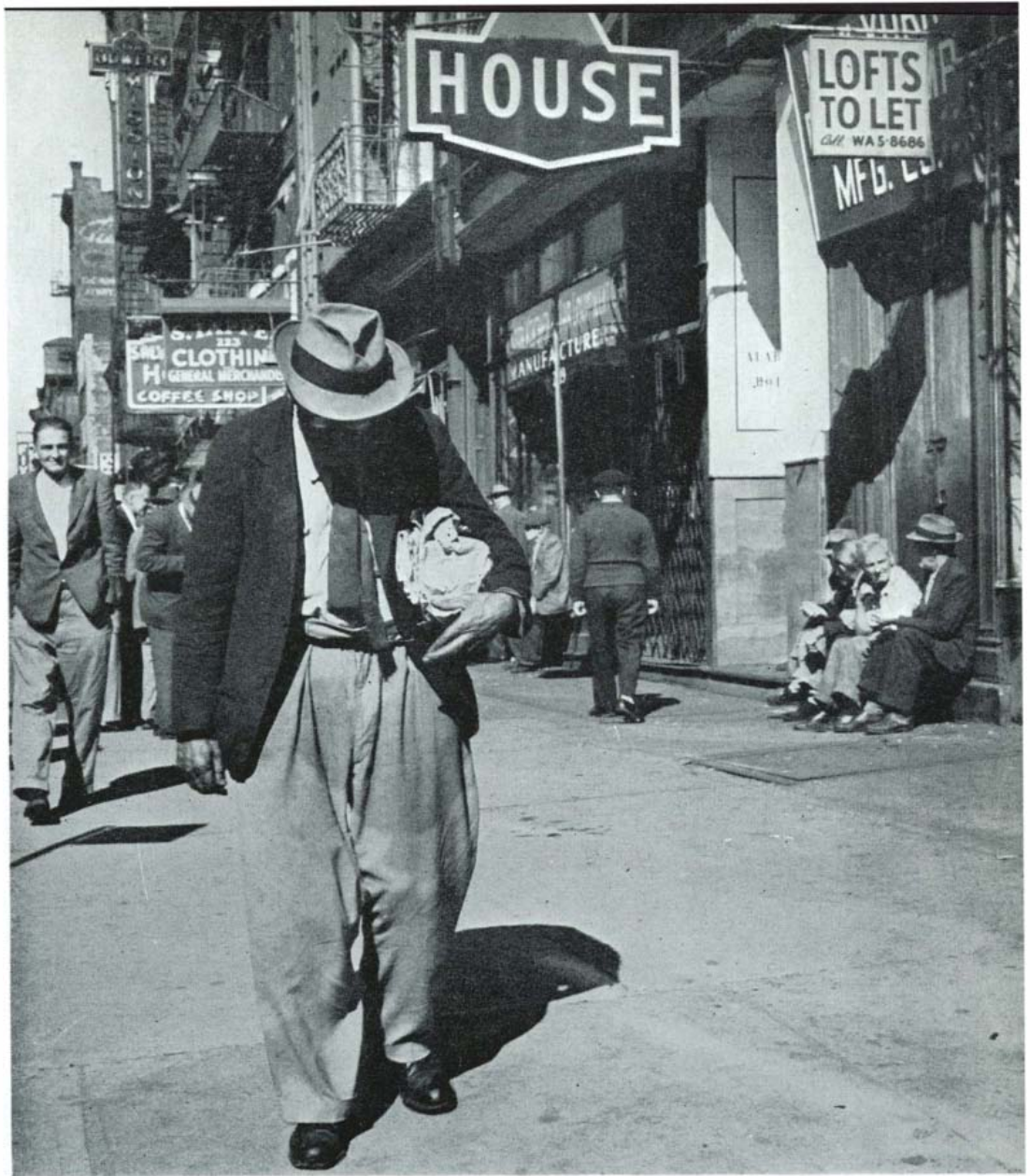
There is a perspective from which you can see the Kremlin fifteen kilometres away. It's going to be an immense approach, with a huge stadium, buildings. . . . It's colossal. If there is no world catastrophe—and, God be praised, it seems less likely now—Moscow will be a very exciting city in ten years time, and perhaps in twenty years the most extraordinary city in the world. It's quite overwhelming.

At the Moscow stadium : Danielle Darrieux, Dany Robin, Nicole Courcel, René Clair, Jacques Flaud, Gérard Philipe



FILMING A SKID ROW

by Mark Sufrin



The Bowery

"Skid Row" is a dramatic film about New York's Bowery, shot with an unusually resourceful candid camera technique. It was independently produced by Lionel Rogosin, and directed by Mark Sufrin, who writes here about his experiences in making the film.

THE Bowery, the infamous street of derelicts in New York, is a syndrome of human blight, waste and decay; misused and shabby men living in a stale tenement city-confusion. At the turn of the century, the Bowery was a high-life district; it has long outlived its reputation, with only faded memories of that kind of vitality remaining. For years the street has been a refuge for the marginal people—the homeless and friendless, the alcoholic, the dope addict, the mentally ill, the prostitute, the aged, the petty thief, the uneducable and unemployable, the occasional railroad worker and seaman—a sociological underground that moves in and out of city hospitals and prisons, welfare offices, grinding jobs, domestic courts, seedy employment agencies, and all the grey, antiseptic smelling unprivate places. It is a sifting down to the bottom level—the sediment of a society that is inexorably carried down to this last place to exist. And beyond all the other poignancies and rationalisations is the salient impulse of drink and the fact of drunkenness—stale beer, cheap wine and whisky, the harsh, blinding liquid squeezed from canned-heat, and the ingenious extraction of alcohol from any source.

I
In our experience and knowledge, this would be the first attempt to make a feature-length film about a skid row. How to make such a film? To deal with it as a few city blocks of physical and social decay, spanned by a dark and dirty elevated train, with stratifications of alienation, would be merely an experiment in urban sociology. It had to be individualised, and this was difficult not only in terms of dramatic action but of the kind of people to use. Looking at the men on the street, their grubby sameness, it seemed as though there were some correlation between body structure and misfortune. However, this snobbery was the beginning of our education. It was decided to make a film about a few men—alcoholics (a sociological and psychological abstraction, but in human terms a suffering personality) on the very level and the place in which they lived.

What we wanted to avoid was cheap melodrama set against "real" or "documentary" settings. What we intended was to extract a simple story from the Bowery itself. Not a "typical" or "symbolic" story, but an essence of truth of the place to expose (not dramatise) the hopelessness, the aimless dread and fear of such lives—without an arrogant sentimentality or too-generous morbidity on our part. For the other side of the Bowery is what men live in all places of the world; they fraternise, banter, work a little, and feel not too sorry for themselves.

For months we observed and talked with the men, drank in



Left and right : Bowery down and outs

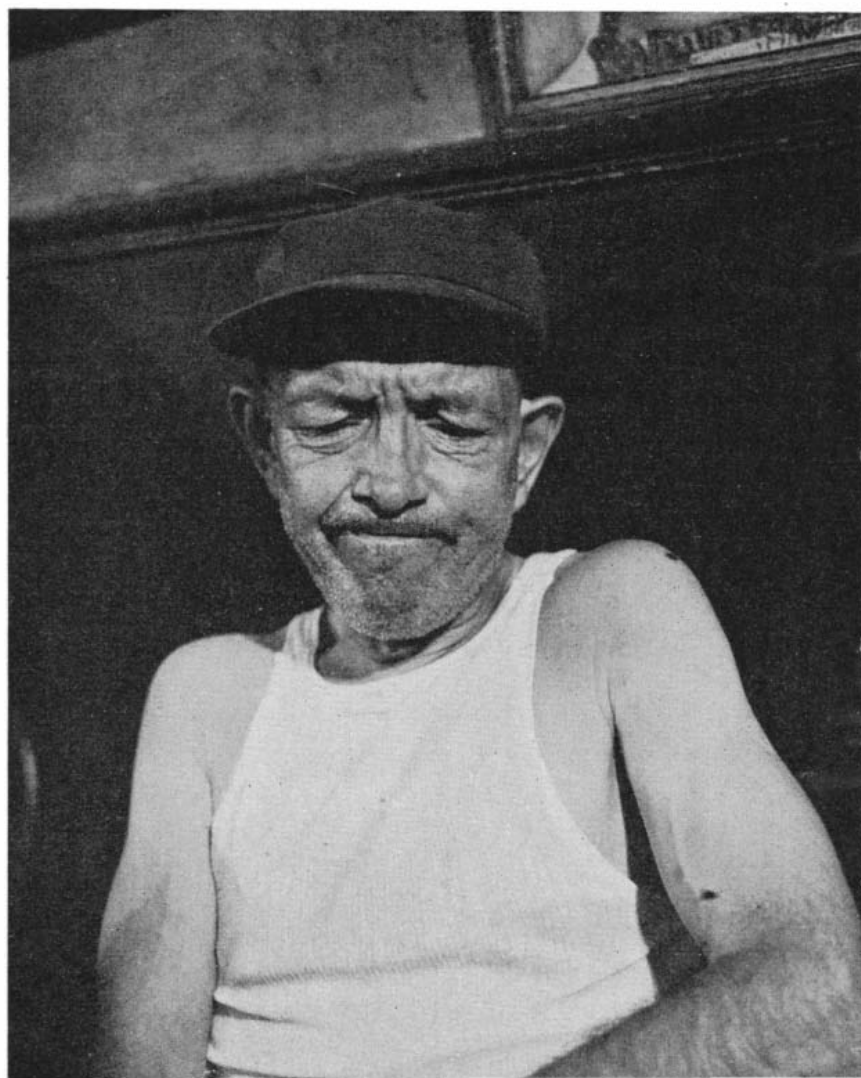
the bars, walked the streets, visited the missions and flophouses, before deciding what shape the film would take. The Bowery is not a bizarre sin-street of women, lewd gratification or illegal dissipations ; but a furtive night-street of men and sleazy bars, huddled and broken figures in doorways, shattered men who wish to paralyse in themselves with drink and senseless violence what human beings desire most to keep alive. We decided to make the film as we saw the street. It would be photographed as exactly as we could while the cycle of each numbing day followed another ; action would be recreated only within the frame of the script and precisely as we knew it transpired. Our actors were taken from the street and would speak in their own argot, with guides of what to say only for story purposes. Direction on our part would try to define the action, but not gesture or inflection to fit a man to a specific role. But more than selecting "real" people to play "real" people, we evolved the roles as a synthesis of the Bowery. Then we proceeded to look for men who would not only *be* what they were supposed to be *acting*, but men capable enough to perform before a camera. In any other milieu this would not be too difficult a task ; but here was the added problem of the psychologically unstable character of the population.

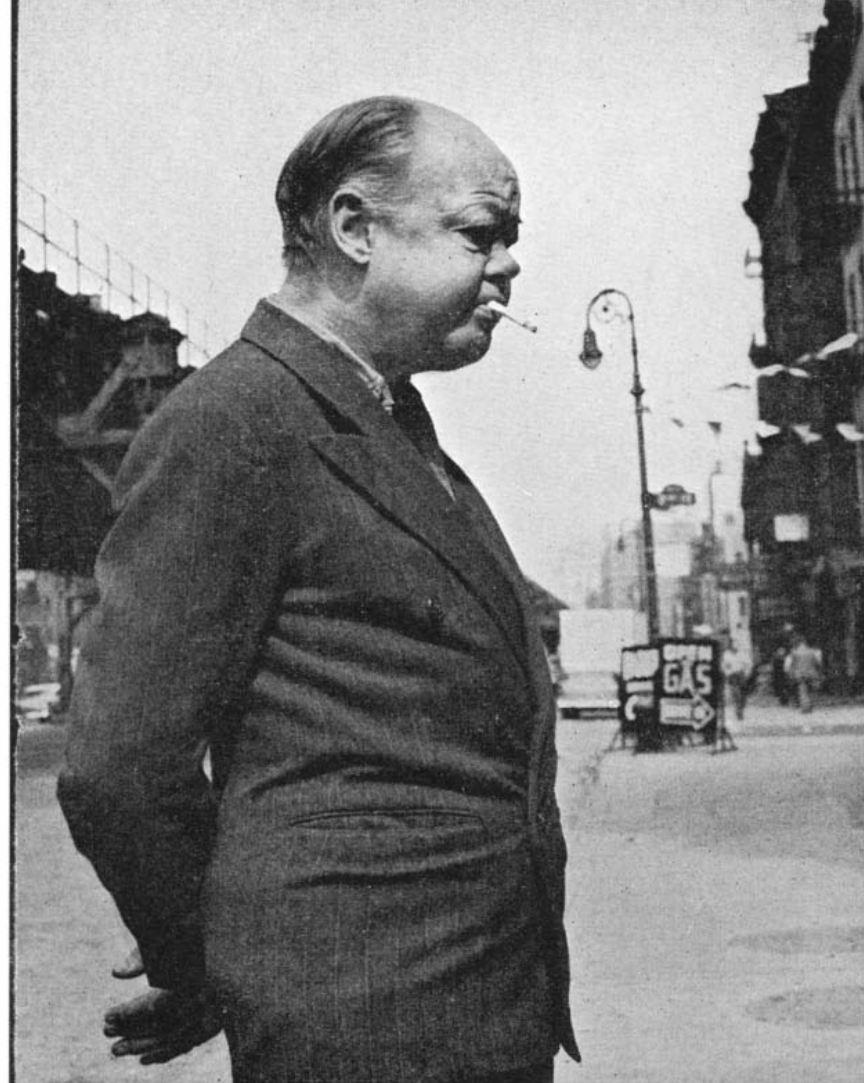
The actual *mise-en-scène* of the Bowery was perfect ; but there was some hesitancy on our part. As we conceived the film, we were uncertain whether we were telling the truth about a place or merely presenting an outsider's version of what the Bowery is. As we selected the players we became certain of the approach and the insight gained. Standing on a corner where the younger men looked for a day's work on passing trucks, we spotted what looked like a perfect choice for one of the main characters—physically he was all that could be asked. When we approached and talked to him, we were amazed and delighted with the almost exact duplication of his own story to ours. If this seems a little juvenile or naive, permit me to explain. It is one thing to "write" a role and then cast it—even with a non-professional. It is quite another to give a man a specific age, appearance, occupation, sectional origin, a set of circumstances, then to walk to a street corner and say "that looks like him" and then discover that he is precisely what you said, right down to the sum of money (almost to the dollar) he earned and threw away drinking. With the other leading character

it was the same story, although some of the features of his shrewd and alcoholic fantasist's personality were pieced out scene by scene so that he was never quite aware, until the end, that it was *himself* on film and not someone else he was purporting to play.

The "supporting" cast was a gift of the street itself. The Bowery is a spectrum of a thousand personalities, stories and lives. There are gnarled, lumpy workers' faces ; wilted, aged, seamy faces ; haggard, pouchy, teary alcoholic's faces ; and there are bright-eyed old seamen, hard ferret-faced grifters, and pimply young *luftmensch*. And there is also a comic tatter about the place. It is a babel of accents, dialects and twangs ; men from all over the world with stories and personal misfortune of every kind and experiences beyond the knowledge or desire of most people. They walk the street—men with ego-supporting fantasies and childlike temperaments ; violent bruisers, and poor muttering dolts and psychotics—with the licence of a culture unwilling or unable to care. Most of the population of thousands are harmless but themselves are harmed, holding on to an existence that means loneliness, terror, and death in some alley or flophouse at the end.

Very few, once they hit the Bowery, ever leave, are reclaimed or rehabilitated. These are the people who "just don't give a goddam" any longer. Free of the whip of normal ambition, responsibility or demands (though they live lives of ritualised retreat), their only imperative is the need for alcohol. The need to buy it and to sleep it off. Outside of the relatively small percentage of occasional or non-drinkers, it is all the same to the Bowery "Wino"—night, early morning, rain, winter and summer, listening to the agonised jump of the jukebox or walking through the street which contains all the elements of normal city life—they respond to an intense inner-compulsion. They are men too concerned with the fracture of their own personality (though they are only conscious of its demands).





II

Outside of the mechanical details, not too much pre-production planning could be done. Since we did not wish to commit ourselves beforehand, no bar or flophouse owner, none of the furtive side of the Bowery, was contacted. We did a certain amount of research at Yale University and with physicians connected with Bellevue Hospital, where clinics have been established for the study of alcoholism. The officials of the Bowery Mission promised their co-operation, and with this we were ready to start. The script was written, locations chosen, and arrangements for a crew made. For the bulk of the film, it would consist only of Lionel Rogosin, who produced and conceived the idea of a film on the Bowery, myself, Richard Bagley (who photographed *The Quiet One*) as cameraman (there was little specialisation among us, the functions of story, script and direction mutually shared with each taking a little more responsibility in one area), and Darwin Deen as assistant cameraman. Each of us also handled a second camera at times. The small size of the crew was a necessary element of making the film. We were going to do a good deal of the filming from a car or in a very rapid, mobile method when out on the street itself; we didn't want the commotion and sprawl of a regular production set-up. It put a tremendous strain on us, each trying to perform many functions plus added hindrances that such a place presented. Just about the time we decided to start filming, the city went ahead with its plans to tear down the elevated structure that has shadowed the Bowery for so many years. In the end, it would mean death to skid row, but the disadvantage of working under these conditions would have compensation in this last (and probably only) record of an infamous place.

Ugly, blighted buildings that degenerated to ruin in fifty to a hundred years—without grace, without history, and soon, without function. Only here and there a Victorian exuberance,

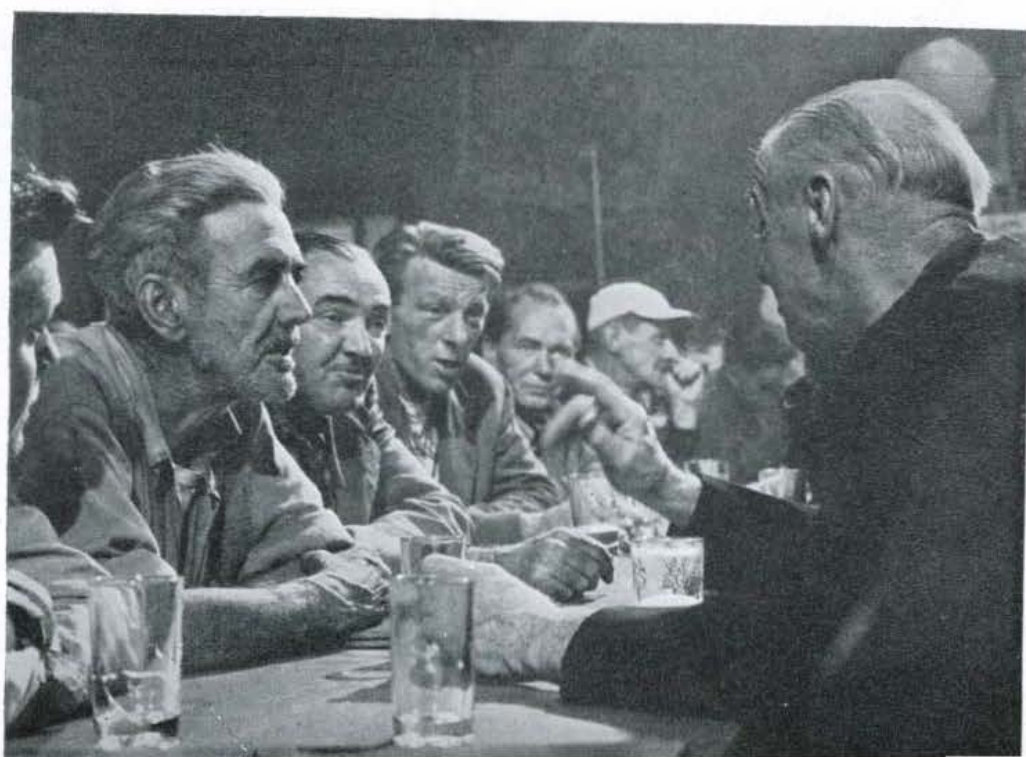
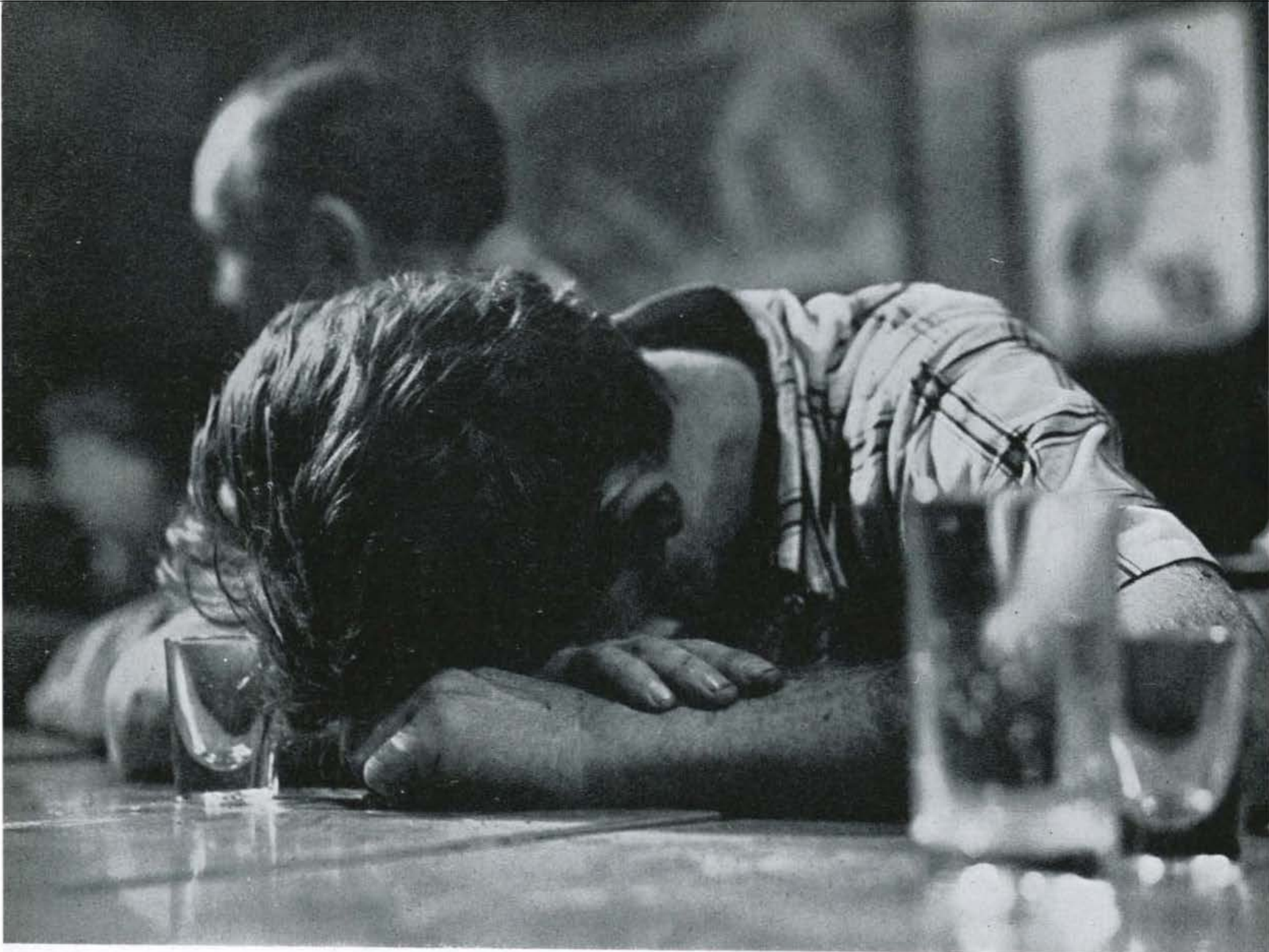
Georgian stateliness, a dark and empty Gothic savings bank. Cracked sidewalks; cobbled streets with rusting, unused trolley tracks, pawnbrokers with their mean, mildewed harvest; restaurant supply-houses; the "horsemarkets" where the Bowery eats; furniture stores with gaudy, chromium novelties; and the lofts of cheap garment factories and ragpickers—these are the other parts of the mosaic that make up the Bowery. The men stand about in groups, talking, cursing, muttering in drunken triumph or agony; a flurry of fists, a traffic accident, a figure collapsing to the pavement, occasionally breaking the monotony (but even the violence, the bleeding and cracked faces, the drunkenness, is so much a part of ritual and routine as to be monotony itself). Beyond all this was the phenomenon that can frighten and shatter the person who walks with "some-where to go," who knows a home and a job, whose horizons extend beyond a few city blocks—the hesitant, shuffling, reeling walk of the men up-and-down the street, their hands clenched rigidly or violently declaiming counterpoint to their babbling. This, and the endless parade of bodies sitting, slumped, stretched prone in drunken release—nothing to do, nowhere to go.

The cast, at least those figuring in the story element of the film, had to be coddled, cajoled and watched. Over the months it gave us the personalities of nursemaids, social workers, psychologists, and jail turnkeys. A few turned out to be belligerent drunks who disappeared from the "set" at the most inopportune intervals and could be found only after a diligent search of the bars (from where, surprisingly, they allowed themselves to be led quite amiably). Another was taken in a police raid, sent to a city prison where his full grey beard was unceremoniously shaved and his clothes (which had already figured in a few thousand feet of film) burned. At approximately the same time (despite dire warnings) the two leading characters decided to get their hair cut, though the previous scenes showed them as somewhat shaggy (the entire action of the film takes place over three days). What more elemental blow to a film-maker? What more, we were soon to discover. This threw our already hazy schedule completely off, and ensuing weeks had to be spent in the proverbial "shooting around." After that, we shaved them, trimmed their hair and took their "costumes" from them after a day's work, complicating our burden.

The bulk of the film was shot in the midst of the hottest

(continued on page 138)







Skid Row

Above : the Bowery at evening. Left : "... the salient impulse of drink and the fact of drunkenness—stale beer, cheap wine and whisky . . . Their only imperative is the need for alcohol. The need to buy it and to sleep it off."

summer in the history of New York (than which there is nothing hotter, more humid and more unpleasant outside a tropical rain forest). After a few weeks of long hours couched like duck hunters under the searing steel top of the automobile, our physical energies began to deteriorate and the strain to tell in almost constant fatigue and short tempers. We recognised what was happening, but because of the nature of the film and the way it was necessary to shoot, dedication, enthusiasm and nervous energy displaced the grievances.

A new problem presented itself : over-inquisitive police (or shall I say, police with a rather decorous sense of duty ?) stopped us constantly to investigate the black sedan with four stealthy ill-dressed young men with a mountain of suspicious-looking boxes and cameras. They would listen to our variously concocted stories with a sardonic indifference that New York City police have cultivated to a fine art—and then we would have to move on. Or again, we would have our camera on a scene and a policeman would come along to break up that particular group and we wound up with half-finished action (to be repeated another day and another day when we had new scenes and an entire backlog to do). After we had been surrounded late one evening on a lonely street off the Bowery by a covey of patrol cars who thought we were thieves, and stopped a few days later by detectives looking for dope or some contraband, we resorted to using official permits that would allow us comparative freedom. It had become a necessary gesture, though we had desired to have as little publicity and truck with red-tape and officials as possible.

By this time our bearded actor, once again sporting a luxuriant growth, was picked up by the police in another round-up. Frantic tracing via a neighbourhood police precinct, a court and a city prison, located him through a sympathetic warden, who promised not to shave him (by this time, his clothes were safely put away each night). At the end of his sentence, we met him at the ferry that brought prisoners from the island, brought him down to the Bowery, installed him in one of the "hotels" (he had formerly slept the year around on the sidewalk in front of a furniture store), and doled out only enough money daily to keep him out of

trouble. At this stage, we supplied each of the cast with letters to the police requesting them to contact us in the event of the bearer of the letter being found drunk, etc.

Filming proceeded for as long as two days with no incidents. Then one morning we arrived to find demolition crews at work on the elevated structure. Our "set" was being torn away before our eyes, and long before we had finished with our exteriors ! After a few days of exploratory surveying and inspection, the crew moved further uptown but another plague took their place. To prepare for the further rehabilitation of Third Avenue (of which the Bowery is a very small section), the streets were being widened. This presented a knotty problem in shooting schedules. Where we had shot before, nothing would match the mounds of dirt and wood barricades, and we had to occupy ourselves in those sections that remained untouched while we waited for the pipes to be relaid, the trenches refilled and the paving applied. After a time the demolition crews returned, and throughout the rest of production we dodged the shower of sparks from acetylene torches, became snarled in the murderous traffic jams that the demolition caused, and watched the sombre and symbolic process of parts of the wormy old structure being swung away on giant cranes.

III

Photography was a problem that was always with us. The heavily latticed windows and sunlight under the elevated, the patches of sunlight in the middle of the sidewalk, the dark areas near the buildings and the inky alleyways, the ebb and flow of the men, made lens readings, focusing and framing a nightmare for the kind of candid work we were doing. On the street at night, it was only in the tiny areas outside the bars, or under hotel and movie-house signs that we could work at all. (Later, when we had exposed ourselves and our purpose, we brought in small portable lights.) This is what usually happened : the camera would be set up and focused on a particular scene ; then we would be discovered by the subjects, the police, a bar owner or storekeeper who didn't want his place of business in the background, or the group would shift and disappear completely. Back the camera would swing into the interior of the car, facing innocently away from the window. Another waiting period ensued until we saw what we wanted, and the entire complication of focusing, framing, getting a meter reading (obtained by sauntering somewhere near the subject) would begin again.

The demands of the film brought us further and further into the open and we became an added part of the daily scene. Traffic and onlookers became a serious problem. We would decide on a shot, jump out of the car, set it up as quickly as possible, place the actors if that was necessary, and in a somewhat high-handed way fend people off from walking through the action. Then, if traffic lights, pedestrians, shopkeepers, dramatic action and camera coincided, back we clambered into a car and drove off quickly to dispel curiosity and to discuss the next shot. We were reviled as "Commies," *Daily Worker* "bums," slobs who traded on the misery of poor unfortunates, slumming probers ; to some we were men from the flagrant tabloids, the F.B.I., or television people. (This would seem to be an interesting index of what a certain socio-economic level thinks of as the proper agencies to collect information or do visual research.) After we became known on the street, the threats, save for one of the demented or aggressively drunk men, stopped, and we began to get more attention and "co-operation" than we bargained for. In the main, we found most of the Bowery inhabitants to be amiable and likeable (in the sense that the mass of derelicts seemed less threatening or feckless once an individualised response was sought for). But if they "sinned" less than we imagined, we met with thievery and moral dishonesty on a supposedly more respectable level. Twice, in dealings with a bar and a flophouse owner, we were either held up for money or refused further permission after we had shot thousands

Bowery bar : the two men are kissing, not whispering to each other

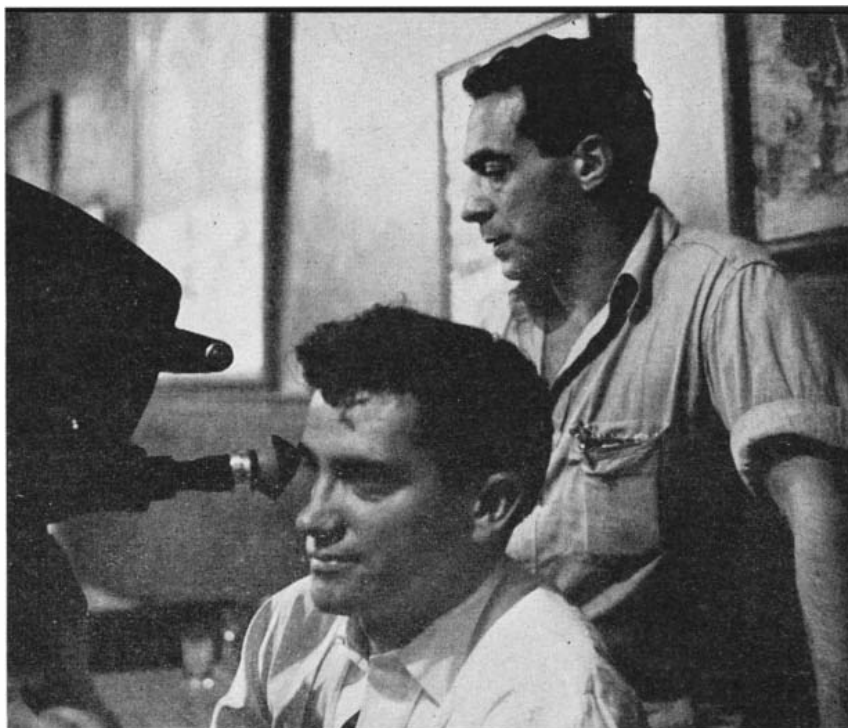


of feet of film in both places.

The bar scenes occupied the last week of filming. This was left for the last because it is the structure, the soul, the substance of the Bowery. Some of the filming was secret, involving a camera with an ingenious reflex-finder arrangement, hidden in a bundle (every film-maker who reads this can appreciate the ludicrousness of carrying a 35 mm. Arriflex with a 400-foot magazine into a bar). We went into the bars, two at a time, unshaven, dressed in Bowery clothes, feigning drunkenness, forced to swallow glass after glass of the foul, flat beer they serve. Sitting in the midst of the agitated ferment of drunks, we became part of the smell, the gargoyle faces, the wine sores, the sleeping and retching, the whole spasmodic disturbance; always imagining that the bartender who glanced over frequently knew that the man with his head down on the bundle was actually a photographer peering through a finder. The other bar scenes were part of a three-day nightmare that blends, in memory, into a psychological indiscretion. Even with the enlarged crew, it almost blew out of control. And that is the irony: the public will never see half of what we captured on film and sound-tape—too raw, too elemental, too brutal, too depressing. And in some instances, because we know that an audience wouldn't believe it as actually happening, but as a concocted repetition of clichés.

IV

If at times I thought I was being too melodramatic in the writing of this article, something happened to prove the essential truth of what a skid row is like and the inevitability of the alcoholic's death. One of the actors began to grow a tremendous paunch which matched preceding scenes not at all. He attributed it to "gas," while we naively attributed it to his tremendous consumption of beer (this was a financial expedient). But no beer drinker ever grew so fat, so fast. When we broached the subject, he would dismiss us with an airy wave and tell us that he would "cut down" and he'd be "oke." We decided to take him to a doctor who told us he was a dying man with cirrhosis of the liver. There were a few strained jokes about getting him on film fast; but actually it was the shock of this one man who we had come to know, work with, and love a little that threw the truth of the Bowery and all skid rows up in block print. He admitted to the doctor that he had been treated before and warned to give up drinking—even beer. His daily consumption, he admitted, was some forty to fifty glasses. The doctor treated him with mercury shots; and for the rest of the production, some seven weeks, he abstained completely and followed doctor's instructions to the letter. After his last day on the film, we told him that he would be kept on until we could find him a job. He had moved from the Bowery and tried to assure us (with very little success) that he was going to "straighten out"—the eternal paean of the skid row man. We doubted but we hoped; to see one man come out of that hell would have been worth everything. He seemed psycho-



At work : Richard Bagley, cameraman, and Mark Sufrin, director

logically revived by the responsibility of his job and our companionship: it gave him something for the next day, for every day. But what secret impulses of self-destruction lie within the alcoholic, what the end of the film meant and the anomic state it brought him to, is too difficult and painful to imagine. He started drinking again one afternoon, and two days before the writing of this article he was found dead in a Bowery bar (not in the place we knew him to frequent—they had been told about his condition by the man himself to stall temptation during production. Even on the Bowery a man can want to hide what he thinks is his shame and weakness).

Mr. Rogosin, Mr. Bagley and myself, the three who actually made the film, tried within our resources and the difficulties inherent in the project to make an honest, compassionate record of some human beings in a state of prolonged crisis. If we caught something of the loneliness, the ignorance, the waste and futility of such lives, and communicated it to others, that will suffice.

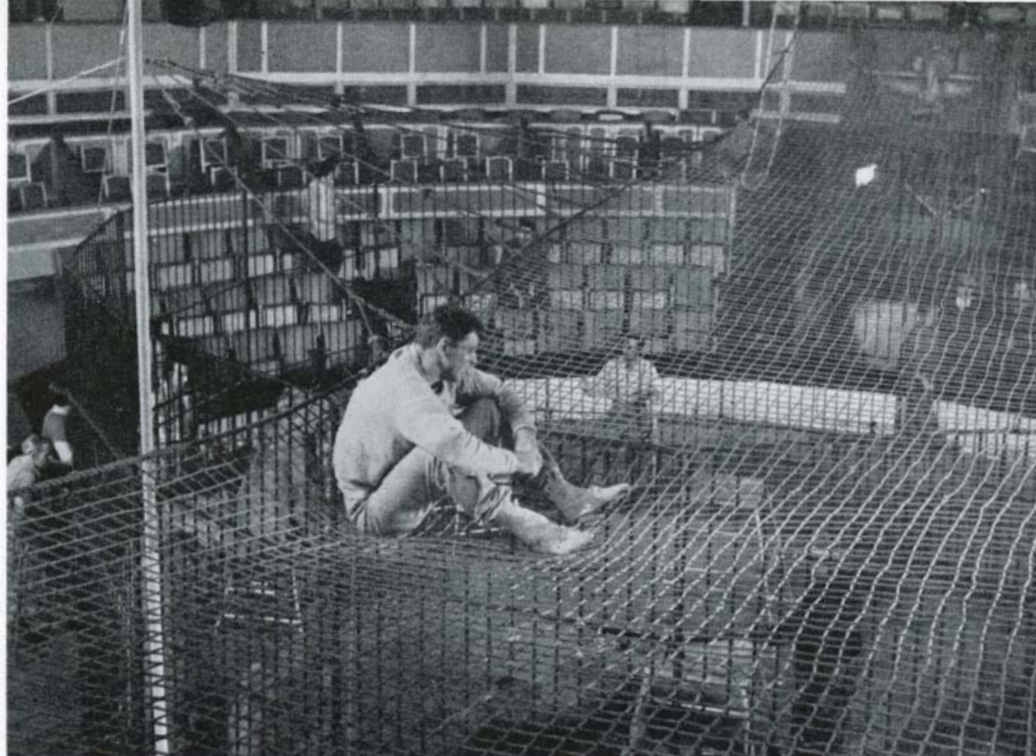
The morning after the last day's shooting, we three met for a late breakfast. Each of us, in his own way, that previous night had suffered some variety of remorse, of guilt (though we were happy enough to finish the photography). It was rather a strange reaction, even making allowances for the normal letdown. I can only explain my own feeling. At first it was a sense of guilt at having used these men for my own purpose. And as that rationalisation wore away, the truth emerged. There was an involvement with humanity here, a profoundly moving experience—and now I had escaped that frightening place. *They* still remain.

Sub-Titler's Love Song

Chérie, je te désire
(I'm fond of you, my dear)—
Baisotons, je t'en prie!
(Have you a hug for me?)
Tes yeux, tes seins, ton corps
(The things I love you for)—
Me rendrent presque fou
(All make me sigh for you)!

Comment—tu me détestes
(You've lost your interest)?
Et tu t'en fou de moi
(Is that the way things are)?
Tu rien dis que "Merde"
(You never really cared)?
Alors, fiche-moi la paix
(You'd better go away)!

ANTHONY BRODE.



Trapeze

Carol Reed's new film, made for the Hecht-Lancaster organisation, and with the action set in Paris, is a melodrama with a circus background. Much of it was shot (in CinemaScope) on location in the Cirque d'Hiver and in the streets of Paris at night. The leading players are Burt Lancaster (above, in the Cirque d'Hiver), Gina Lollobrigida (rehearsing a scene with Lancaster and Carol Reed, left), Tony Curtis and Katy Jurado. Screenplay is by Wolf Mankowitz, camerawork by Robert Krasker.



PEOPLE OF TALENT (4)

Aldo Ray

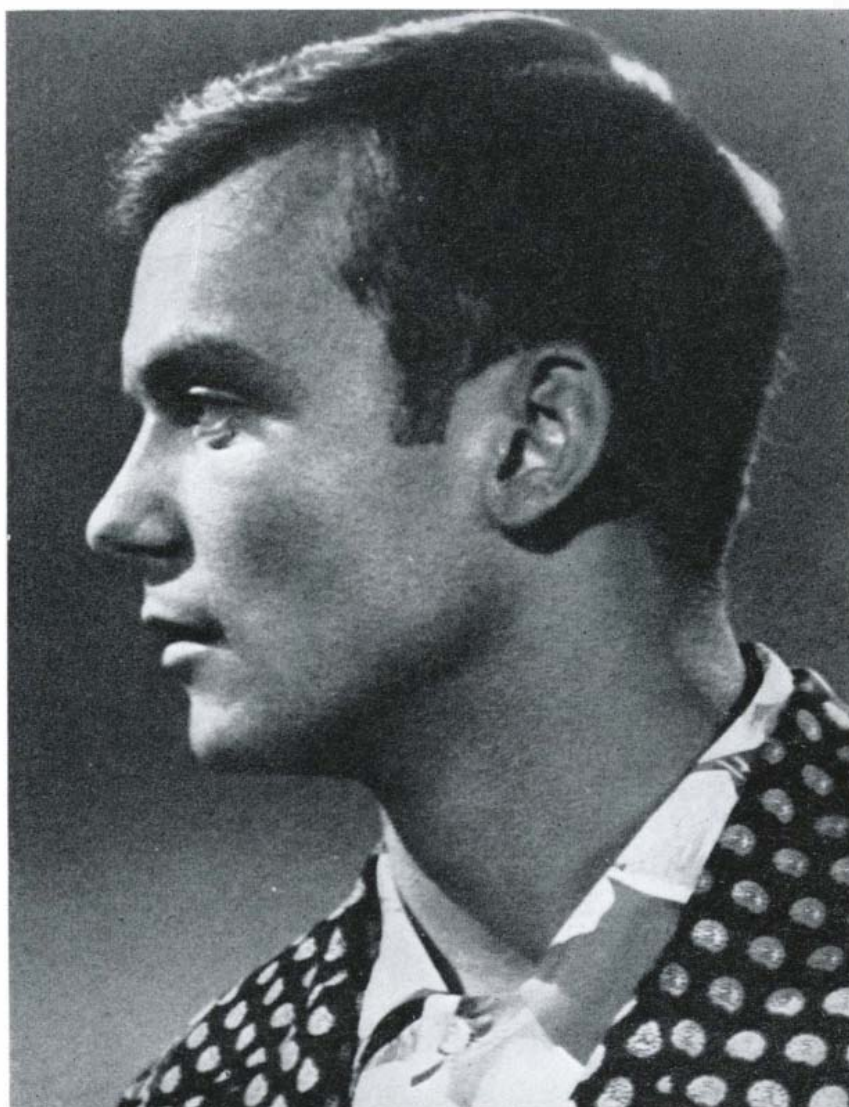
To give the performance he did in *The Marrying Kind* after so little previous experience was clear evidence that in Aldo Ray the screen had discovered one of its rare "naturals." This was no carefully edited, tricked out performance, but a strikingly sincere and imaginative interpretation: an exceptional talent responding to a finely intuitive director. The film achieved only a limited release, but that cannot entirely account for the performance failing to earn the critical acclaim it deserved. Aldo Ray was a newcomer (the credit titles claimed to "introduce" him), and to the business of "putting him across" neither the film's style nor the actor himself brought any of the normal pushing salesmanship. There was about him none of the personality assurance that exacts a special consideration of the actor as distinct from his role.

Aldo Ray's personality is admirably suited to interpret social comedy-drama of the order of *The Marrying Kind*, a genre nowadays inadequately explored in America and non-existent in England. More than this, after the spate of bitter, moody postwar heroes, his dogged optimism and resilience is a jump free of the heritage of disenchantment. His naiveté may appear pathetically inadequate to deal with the social savagery of everyday life around him, but—as so often in the case of the best screen comedians—this apparent guilelessness is his saving grace. When he accepts his fellow-workers' wedding present with the warmest gratitude, only to discover it is a pair of earplugs, the joke's unconsciously cruel aspect falls wide of the mark because of the actor's goodnatured acceptance of himself as the butt. And one becomes aware that this likeable character's unaffectedness is not simply naive (no repeat of the all-American Van Johnson character pattern), but a mature rejection of spite and vanity: a reasoned moral force.

With its instinctive accuracy of milieu and mood, this performance became a moving account of the worker's struggle for adjustment and survival in any big city. It was the final pushing of the character beyond endurance, and the last resilience of hope, in the closing episodes—the death of his child, the street accident which deprived him of his role as breadwinner—that gave the film its unusual (and ultimately unbalancing) tragic weight.

The authority of Aldo Ray's performance seems more amazing when one considers its background, its meagre basis of experience. He was born in Pennsylvania twenty-nine years ago; at the age of three he moved with his Italian parents to Crockett, California, where he was educated. On high school graduation day he received his induction notice from the Navy. For two years he served as a frogman in the Pacific, and on his discharge in 1946 returned to college. Before completing his studies, however, he was coerced into taking part in a municipal campaign, from which he emerged Constable of Crockett. His term of office expired in September, 1951.

Thereafter it was by chance that he drove his brother Guido to San Francisco to apply for one of the football player's roles in *Saturday's Heroes*. Guido was turned down but Aldo was offered the job. Columbia then signed him to a long term contract, and he played in *The Barefoot Mailman* and *My True Story*—both "heavies." Then George Cukor, with his fine casting flair, suggested him for *The Marrying Kind*. Before this was released, however, Cukor brought him to the notice of M.G.M., for whom he played the



amiable dumb boxer in *Pat and Mike*, a riotous but utterly real characterisation. His subsequent treatment by the home studio was perfunctory indeed: he was Rita Hayworth's faithful marine in the absurd *Miss Sadie Thompson*, he played a small part in a weak remake of *The Awful Truth*, called *Let's Do it Again*. *The Gentle Sergeant* is some compensation.

Loaned out to Warner's, his unassuming talent found few chances in the sprawling tedium of *Battle Cry*, and for Paramount in *My Three Angels*, where he found himself in the company of a roarily complacent Ustinov and a Bogart dealing out his personality like an expert cardsharp. All the same, he built up a relaxed, convincing performance in this film, registering his personality in a way far too subtle for such a farcical free-for-all.

For Aldo Ray is no longer a "natural." The danger to "naturals" is that in learning to harness their talent to the demands of a profession, they are exposed to all the tricks of the trade. In their selection of these tricks lies their final quality as performers. Aldo Ray's technical advance in the four years since *The Marrying Kind* enables him now to work in subtler, more economical degree; there is an authoritative reserve—and, still remarkably intact, the original rare lack of ostentation. All the same, his career seems to have become a nomadic drifting round the studios looking for the right kind of film. The good humour, the lenitive smile, the frog in the throat voice betray nothing of the disappointment the actor must feel after such exciting beginnings under Cukor's guidance.



A Day from GERVAISE

Left : Two meditations on the set. René Clément and (below) Maria Schell, with Suzy Delair. It is just before the first take of the scene ; the actress closes her eyes, "trances," while rehearsing to herself the way she is going to play it.

Right : Clément calls "Action," and the scene is played. Gervaise, at the end of a family supper with her second husband Coupeau (François Perier), is asked to sing. While she sings, her first husband—cause of much unhappiness in her life—arrives unexpectedly. She alone catches sight of him. She goes on with the song (which she has previously recorded on playback, and is now singing to). Then, just before the end, she breaks down.





Adapted from Emile Zola's novel *L'assommoir*, *Gervaise* has been a project of René Clément's for eight years. The script by Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost, developed in collaboration with Clément, rearranges a good deal of the original massive chronicle to centre on the story of Gervaise herself, and the alcoholism of Coupeau, her second husband. The film's style, Clément says, will be "naturalistic"; the period reconstruction is based on unusually detailed research; and, to create a special visual texture—something equivalent to the famous contemporary photographer Nadar—Clément is shooting the film on Eastmancolor stock, which will be printed black-and-white.





Laurence Olivier as Richard III

Film Reviews

RICHARD III

A SHOT of the crown of England, held high, opens Laurence Olivier's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (London Films); a close-up of the new king, Edward IV, tense, almost incredulous, and then the crown descends with ambiguous firmness upon his head. The camera, moving round the palace, catches here the secret smile, there the guarded deference, everywhere a watchful insecurity on the part of weak and strong alike. The mood has been instantly and excitingly set, in a brilliant expansion of the play—for this opening scene is actually the last scene of *Henry VI*, Part Three, and it also makes a highly effective prologue to the introduction of Gloucester that follows. A Gloucester not

exaggeratedly repellent, who will assume his full depravity through subtler means than greasepaint as the action unfolds; his first soliloquy (shot with remarkable agility in a single take) blocks in with irresistible authority the character's general outlines—the rasping staccato voice with its hint of hysteria ready to burst through the sarcastic arrogant inflections, the deadly seriousness behind the levity betraying a powerful maladjustment. Olivier here makes no attempt to disguise the theatrical soliloquy, as in *Hamlet*, but invests it with a new and devastating potency. By cynical emphases, by phrasings that surprise, by shameless unwavering looks, he adds insolence to intimacy.

From this point on the action gathers a driving impetus which reminds one of the first part of the Mankiewicz-Houseman *Julius Caesar*. The scene of Anne's conversion from poisoned loathing to yielding fascination (surely one of the most daring quick changes of heart in all dramatic literature) is brilliantly emended and miraculously convincing. Sharp end-of-scene cuts to frequently surprising images also serve the illusion of a dynamic drive, and their boldness aptly reflects the nature of the villainy to come.

In the film, Gloucester's influence is never absent; whether gaudily parading his deformity or slinking like a black spider round a pillar, he relentlessly disseminates his bile. Erupting on a council of nobles his nimble wit and apparent playfulness foxes and disquiets, but when the mask is dropped the private dangerous face beneath can shock and chill. This is a subtle, rounded portrayal of a rare stature, perhaps Olivier's most exciting achieve-

ment as an actor, certainly his most satisfying as an actor-director. The cinematic conception of the whole play marks a resounding advance over the laboured *Hamlet*; character and direction are informed with a thrilling intelligence and grasp, invention is always neat and genuinely constructive to mood and situation.

In the second hour one's interest in the complicated intrigue is less consistent; one regrets the meandering structure of the play rather than the handling of the film. Judicious pruning has done its best to thin the treacherous jungle, to emphasise the main line of the action, but there lacks a compelling dramatic balance—evil holds all the cards and we can only wait for ambition to o'erleap itself. Richard's coronation, however, becomes a moment of sardonic triumph. Love and kingship have both been realised, yet resist enjoyment; only from a more and more monstrous flouting of morality can any satisfaction be wrested. So, fanatically, Richard alienates his henchman Buckingham—"I am not in a giving mood today." This truly grandiose act of folly loads the odds against final success, intensifies the race to disaster.

After the appearance of his victims' ghosts to the tormented king on the night before battle, his temporary loss of nerve is Shakespeare's brilliant structural *reculer pour mieux sauter*—over the last great tragic hedge. Olivier's presentation of this ends on a moment of typically audacious insight; as the army moves into battle and Richard is able to shrug off his qualms of the previous night, he bends over his horse to murmur in almost childlike elation, "Richard's himself again." This textual addition creates a wonderful surge of sympathy for the tragic, doomed monster.

The battle of Bosworth itself, however, fails to carry adequate weight. A rhythm that should be mounting seems only fitful and jerky here; the spectacle appears tentatively conceived and shot, the cinema's superior resources for this scene rather unimaginatively exploited. But the final slaying of the king is presented with shattering effect. A crowd of enemy soldiers bears down on the valley where the horseless Richard stands, and he goes down fighting with the savage defiance and pathetic courage of a fox, challenging the hopeless odds to the last.

Richard III is not only a very worthy and remarkable achievement but a strong contender for the best Shakespearean film yet made. Its excellent cast acts with a general urgency and welcome lack of ranting; Ralph Richardson as Buckingham, John Gielgud as Clarence, Claire Bloom as Lady Anne, Cedric Hardwicke as Edward IV and Mary Kerridge as his Queen are all admirably sober and purposeful. Sir William Walton has unhappily misunderstood the nature of the kingship his music is meant to illustrate, and it booms majestically and continually of dignity and glory—not, one feels, a conscious irony. The colour (Technicolor: VistaVision) is patchy, particularly in the battle scenes, and the settings are fairly conventional. But these considerations remain minor beside the excitement of so much of the rest.

DEREK PROUSE.

TWO ACRES OF LAND and MUNNA

THE Indian cinema has always appeared as something of an enigma to European audiences, due both to its inaccessibility and to the excessive length of most Indian films, which poses awkward problems for even specialised exhibitors. The content of most of these films—lumbering historical reconstructions and domestic dramas laced with an inordinate number of songs and dances—makes them hardly suitable for export, and it is only during the post-war years that a noticeable change of direction has occurred. A small group of film-makers, alive to social changes and eager to communicate the realities of Indian life, have rejected the old formulas in favour of a new realist movement, and both the films reviewed here are notable examples of this trend. Neither Bimal Roy, who made *Two Acres of Land* (Films de France), nor Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, the writer-director of *Munna* (Contemporary Films), is a newcomer to film making. Roy earned a reputation in the 1930's as an excellent cameraman; the films he subsequently directed sometimes employed unknown actors, and *Two Acres of Land* (made for his own company) appears to be his most important production to date. Abbas, the great-grandson of an Urdu poet, has a considerable number of literary works to his credit and began his film career as a scriptwriter. As far back as 1944, he directed *Children of the Earth*, a moving documentary feature about the Bengal famine, which was shown in several countries.

Two Acres of Land indicates Bimal Roy's concern for the acute rural problem which has existed in India for many years. His hero, a poor Bengali farmer, accompanied by his son, is forced to



"Two Acres of Land": Kanaya and his mother

find work in Calcutta in order to pay off a large debt, and the harshness of life in this iron city leads inevitably to the tragic conclusion: he is evicted from his land and his family is left without home or money. The influence of de Sica is present almost everywhere—the location shooting in Calcutta, the cheerful little boot-black boy who befriends the peasant's son, and the camaraderie of the slum-dwellers often echo *Bicycle Thieves* and *Shoeshine*. The hard life of the rickshaw coolies is documented with fierce realism and the father-son relationship handled with a simple purity and affection. The rather contrived twists of plot towards the end may appear unnecessarily naive to a sophisticated Western audience, but this sort of melodramatic working-out seems to be an indispensable part of contemporary Indian film writing.

Apart from its obvious sympathies, *Munna* lays claim to be the first Indian feature without songs. As with *Two Acres of Land* it features an abandoned small boy—an appealing, wide-eyed creature played by Romi—whose adventures take him through a cross-section of Indian life until he finally relinquishes his rich foster-parents in favour of his real mother. The narrative, reminiscent of *Oliver Twist*, is peopled with a rich succession of extravagantly conceived characters; the alternation of humour and pathos is nicely judged, and the most successful creations (including the kindly clerk who adds Munna to his family of ten children and the rich couple whose lives he deeply affects) are observed with genuine feeling and understanding. The climactic scene where Munna returns to his real mother wrings the emotions unashamedly and succeeds in being honestly moving. The performances in both films are generous and uninhibited in style; the big rhetorical and sentimental scenes are played for all they are worth and the children, mostly ragged little nomads, seem to possess a natural optimism.

Neither of these pictures was easy to make. During a discussion meeting at the 1955 Edinburgh Festival, K. A. Abbas spoke on his personal attitude to film-making and his hopes for the Indian industry in general. He hinted that there were many difficulties to be overcome before the realist Indian cinema could consolidate



"Les Grandes Manoeuvres" : Gérard Philipe and Michèle Morgan

its present achievements, as both trade and audience had to be won over to the new ideals. Abbas, at any rate, continues to experiment, for he is at present engaged on an Indian-Russian co-production, and there are signs that further subjects with contemporary themes are being prepared.

It should be noted, incidentally, that both *Two Acres of Land* and *Munna* have been severely cut for British distribution—the story lines are reasonably intact but continuity is often disconcertingly choppy and confusing.

JOHN GILLET.

LES GRANDES MANOEUVRES

THE *Punishment of Don Juan* was a title René Clair thought of for the new film he has written and directed, before arriving at *Les Grandes Manoeuvres* (Films de France), which he decided was most suitable for a study of provincial manners at a time (a few months before 1914) when "the classic image of the seducer was the young cavalry officer." With characteristic lucidity, which enables him to discuss his own work quite dispassionately, as if it were someone else's, he has also remarked that the film's dramatic problem lies in its change of mood halfway through; what begins as a comedy of seduction ends as a tragedy of love.

The situation itself might have been conceived by Stendhal. Armand, a young Lieutenant stationed in a provincial town, is a notorious Don Juan. Momentarily bored, he makes a bet with some fellow-officers that he will seduce any lady in the town whose name they may draw out of a hat. The lot falls upon Marie-Louise, a Parisienne who has been divorced by her husband and is now installed by her rich protector in the little town. She proves unusually inaccessible. But the longer she resists, the more she finds herself drawn to Armand; equally, he discovers himself

for the first time genuinely in love. When she has finally decided to yield to him, she discovers the existence of the bet. Next morning, Armand rides out of the town with his regiment, sent out on manoeuvres. . . .

The film begins beautifully. The sequence of the regiment parading through the town, of numerous girls and married women insolently, furtively and heartbrokenly watching Armand from different windows, is realised with extraordinary skill and charm. Through Armand's discarded loves Clair introduces us to various conditions of life in the town, sketching in unwitting cuckolds, indignant fathers and jealous rivals with light, penetrating strokes. Up to the time that Armand and Marie-Louise realise they are in love, indeed, the development on both levels—their relationship, and the background of provincial busybodies, gossips and interested parties—is faultless. The sense of period is exact but unostentatious; using colour for the first time, Clair employs a discreet, tasteful palette that evokes *salon* painters of the era. The officers' mess, Marie-Louise's luxurious suite (the kind of place which, by its very nature, one feels she must have been set up in), a *bal musette* at which the couple spend an evening, the disreputable café where various girls hopefully await Armand—all these are quietly, satisfyingly alive, and reflect Clair's half humorous, half nostalgic, severely affectionate attitude towards the period. In many incidental moments, casually inserted, never overstressed, provincial manners and the legend of the cavalry are mocked: two ladies arrive at a fashionable reception wearing the same hat, and are momentarily frozen in horror, and an officer preparing to seduce a silly married woman who insists on observing formalities and demands a cup of tea, elegantly announces, "*d'abord le thé.*" These are slender observations and incidents building up a slender intrigue, but Clair knows exactly the level on which he is working.

The gently stylised movements, the light and even rhythm, set his own personal tone of comedy.

Later developments, however, demand more than he seems prepared to give them. Certainly the film becomes more "serious"—in the sense that there is less comedy; but it fails to convey human passions suddenly taking over, or a game becoming earnest. Only part of the disappointment may be attributed to Michèle Morgan's rather maddeningly phlegmatic performance; the drama itself never touches that intensity which would make the reversal, the twist, really telling. The tensions of love are not there, the inherent cruelty of the situation never materialises; the atmosphere becomes rather dry and laboured; too much time is taken up with a secondary episode, whereby a quarrel between Armand and a fellow-officer leads to a faintly ridiculous duel—the point being, one supposes, the ironic dissolve to Marie-Louise in church, praying desperately for the life of the man she loves when he is already quite safe and unharmed.

By this time the force of what might have been a finely bitter climax is dissipated, for Clair's self-imposed remoteness, his non-committal approach to the lovers, has reduced the human dimension of his material to a purely intellectual one—and the film is not brilliant enough on this level to survive. An impeccably conceived last sequence (the regiment riding out of town on its way to manoeuvres, the faces of women at windows, and Marie-Louise's window obstinately closed) comes only as a neat q.e.d. Having lost his only real love, Armand rides forlornly away, perhaps to his death a few months later on the battlefield; but in spite of Gérard Philipe's very competent performance (a triumph of intelligence over feeling, for as a Don Juan he gives the impression of being cast against type), it is impossible to feel any more pity for him than for the equally disenchanted Marie-Louise.

To place *Les Grandes Manoeuvres* in relation to Clair's recent work is not altogether simple. In some ways it seems his most ambitious postwar film, though all his films are more ambitious than they seem. That Clair has "lost something" since the days of his famous prewar films is now generally agreed; that he has also gained something has been less often remarked. The heart of the matter lies in a not always satisfactory balance-sheet. In turning increasingly to the comedy of ideas, of intellectual fantasmagoria, he has sometimes sacrificed gaiety and vitality to an excessive dryness, and one guesses this to be due to a personal disillusion. Each of his postwar films has conveyed a kind of loss or discontent. *Le Silence est d'Or* seemed like a valedictory to a period of vanished happiness; *La Beauté du Diable* was at times grimly concerned with the evil potentialities of science, and Faust's visions in the mirror struck a new disturbing note in his work; *Les Belles-de-Nuit* was a dream fantasy based on the idea that each age is falsely nostalgic about the preceding one; now *Les Grandes Manoeuvres* offers a fable on the illusion of love. The failure of the second half of this film makes one wonder, really, what Clair believes in. Undoubtedly aware, in his own elegant phrase, of "the disadvantages of the human condition," he seems disinclined any longer to present, in his work, any of the advantages. If the story of *Les Grandes Manoeuvres* is to have any final dramatic weight, the desirability of love must be made real; it is precisely at this point that Clair withdraws, that the film becomes only an exercise. If Clair will have nothing to do with illusion, he could, all the same, take more positive account of reality.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER

PERHAPS the first thing to say about this film is that it is genuinely strange. In the opening scenes, indeed, it seems too much of a phenomenon; the prologue (Lillian Gish reading a few sentences from the Old Testament to a group of children vignettted against a night sky) leads one to expect a kind of fable, but what follows is a rather uncertain piece of exposition, in which a series of incidents, half realist, half impressionist in tone, abruptly follow each other. As he drives along the countryside in an old stolen car, the travelling preacher Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum) talks to God; but the sequence is too casually composed to make his frightening obsessions real. Then a brief episode at a small town burlesque show, with the preacher's face sullen and murderous as he watches a blonde brassy dancer, brilliantly lifts the tension—only, a moment later, to drop it again.

With Harry Powell's arrival in the little backwoods Alabama

village, however, *The Night of the Hunter* (United Artists) discovers its true style. The preacher, we know, is going to seek out Willa (Shelley Winters), widow of a man recently hanged for murder and a bank robbery, because either she or her two children can lead him to the \$10,000 her husband hid before his capture. God has told Harry to find this money and build a tabernacle with it, and God has previously authorised Harry to kill women if they are sinful and obstruct his purpose.

So, quietly, obliquely, a muted terror and suspense begin. Directing his first film, Charles Laughton sometimes strives too hard for effect; he has chosen a non-realist, symbolic style in which lighting, the unexpected angle or transition, the tricks of silence and sound (he likes sound to precede image at the beginning of a new sequence, for ironic or associative effect) are elaborately calculated. One is occasionally too conscious of influences—the idyllic first shot of the children playing, which seems to come straight from a Griffith film, some interior compositions with a too-German emphasis on objects and shadows—but in general the language of the film seems extraordinarily fresh and individual, the neglected resources of silent cinema are strikingly revived.

The action, which passes during the Depression of the 30's, seems neither historical nor contemporary, but exists in its own deliberate vacuum, and this heightens the atmosphere of the little village with its eccentrics, gossips and revivalists. Harry Powell, on the surface at least, is no more odd than these villagers, which is why they accept him so easily. One enters a world in which the strange, disturbingly, is accepted as normal, and so Willa quickly recovers from the shock of her wedding night, when Harry gives her a brooding lecture on the sins of the flesh, and she realises he has married her to save her soul. Soon she is fervently addressing a religious meeting with him. Again, the boy's instinctive fear of his stepfather seems the more vivid and helpless because no world exists outside this abnormal community—and when the preacher murders Willa one accepts both the compulsive nature of the crime and the fact that the duped villagers commiserate with him when he weeps and tells how, sinful at heart, she ran away in the middle of the night. The scene that follows—an old fisherman's discovery,



The wedding night: Shelley Winters and Robert Mitchum in "The Night of the Hunter"

as he peers through the clear depths of the river water, of the car at the bottom, Willa sitting in it, like a wax model, her hair rigidly flowing—has a chilling inevitability. The image of death is appropriately remote, fantastic.

When the children escape at night and drift in panic-stricken silence down the river in a skiff, melodrama becomes fable. The filming of this scene, from the view across the moonlit river of the two figures running along the bank, the preacher in pursuit, to the shots of the drifting skiff, in which the natural world becomes an uncomprehending witness of the children's flight, has something magical about it. Everything to the children on their journey becomes strange; a house at night with one light burning, and a bird cage glimpsed through the window, looks unnerving and mysterious. Once, sleeping in a hayloft, they are awakened just before dawn by the singing voice they dread, and in the far distance, on the skyline, the preacher appears on horseback. But now his pursuit has taken on a slow, suspended, dreamlike quality, and the effect in these passages is something similar to Dreyer's *Vampyr*—more tenuous, but with the same suggestions of anonymous terror and disturbance.

The tale is now ready for a fairy godmother; and, surely enough, the ragged hungry pair are given refuge by a benevolent eccentric spinster (wonderfully played by Lillian Gish), who adds them to her orphan brood. The humour here is bright, almost pantomimic, but there is a hard, ironic centre to the whimsy. It is only the climax—the preacher catches up with them, but meets his match in Miss Rachel, who succeeds in handing him over to the police—which comes unsatisfactorily. Its melodrama is too obvious and not always convincingly contrived; the film seems uncertain of its level; and—the only serious mistake in James Agee's otherwise unusually delicate script—Miss Rachel's remarks on the innocence, the endurance of children (transcribed from the novel by Davis Grubb, on which the film is based), who can undergo terrible experiences and yet remain untouched, have a strained and uncomfortably pretentious quality.

The Night of the Hunter doesn't altogether, as they say, "come off," but it is a film of extremely individual flavour, and its daring, its indifference to convention, make it uniquely surprising for a Hollywood production today. Its producer, venturing into films for the first time, is Paul Gregory, a young Broadway impresario who has already established a reputation for enterprise in the theatre; one hopes that, in the cinema, *The Night of the Hunter* is only a beginning for him. Its combination of talents is certainly original. In Laughton he has discovered a director of highly interesting gifts; the non-conformism of each, one guesses, has stimulated the other. The casting of Robert Mitchum as the preacher is equally unexpected, and if occasionally his playing seems a little forced, it makes a genuine impact and suggests new resources. There is also a brilliantly malevolent sketch of an inquisitive neighbour by Evelyn Varden. The screen adaptation by the late James Agee was his last work for the cinema; and the cameraman, Stanley Cortez, is given—and takes—his most rewarding opportunities since *The Magnificent Ambersons*.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

HILL 24 DOESN'T ANSWER

ABOVE all, *Hill 24 (Eros)* is an enterprise. A British director, Thorold Dickinson, travels to Israel to make a film about the country's struggle for independence as the British mandate ends and the United Nations are trying to effect a truce in the Israeli-Arab conflict. He has quickly to assimilate something of the atmosphere and customs of a foreign country, and to assess the tensions at a particularly confused moment in its history; as the film is Israeli-financed a nationalist *parti pris*, one assumes, is expected; conditions also demand a talent for improvisation—the film is to be made, with a predominantly Israeli unit, on a variety of actual locations, with interiors in a disused factory roughly converted into a studio.

The subject itself has epic dimensions, and it is possible that the writers, Zvi Kolitz and Peter Frye, were mistaken in choosing a framework of sketches in which to enclose selected "representative" episodes from the war of independence. Not only does this restrict the sweep of the story, but involves some artificiality in the actual linking together of the sketches themselves. In outline, the account of the British policeman (of Irish origin—the film contains an extraordinary number of different nationals) who, encouraged by his love for a Jewish girl, leaves his job and espouses the nationalist cause, is persuasively enough conceived. But it is

weakened by some clumsy, implausible dialogue and the awkwardly inexperienced performance of Edward Mulhare. By contrast, Haya Hararit makes a striking figure of the proud, impassioned and puzzled girl, and the reality of her portrait gives the episode some impact.

It is with the story of the young American-Jewish tourist whose inquiring nature leads him to join the volunteers, and who takes part in the attack on the Old City of Jerusalem, that the film enlarges its scope and achieves some remarkably powerful and exciting passages. The battle for the city, and the exodus after the surrender to the Arabs, are finely done—especially the second part, of which the director makes a sad, immense processional (one is reminded of the funeral in Malraux's *Espoir*). This is a triumph of imaginative response and technique; the images are austere and eloquent, the editing gives them a slow, emphatic rhythm, and the scene becomes greater than its context, a lament for shattered hopes and the savage bitterness of war.

The third sketch, about a young Israeli-Polish soldier who captures a mysterious prisoner in the fighting against the Egyptians in the Negev Desert, and discovers that he is an ex-Nazi, comes as something of an anti-climax—too marginal, one feels, too much an anecdote, inventively handled though it is. But the feeling of the earlier sequence returns as, finally, the volunteers set out to defend Hill 24, one of several commanding the approach to Jerusalem, on the night before the United Nations truce comes into force: a hill they will die defending, and which the different nationals of the truce commission will quarrel over in the morning.

That the film makes a strong impression, in spite of evident flaws in writing and construction, is essentially due to the sense of enterprise that informs it. Thorold Dickinson has met the technical challenge impressively, bringing off some elaborately staged action and giving the film as a whole a solid, expert finish. Also, his response to the material is honest and enthusiastic. A sympathy for this cause comes strongly through and, combined with the immediacy of atmosphere, creates breadth and forcefulness. He has discovered some interesting Israeli players—Haya Hararit, David Amiram as the Polish volunteer, Michael Shilo as the underground leader, Margalit Oved as the Yemenite nurse and, later, soldier—who equally overcome the difficulties of their sketchy roles and impose a sharp authority.

JAMES MORGAN.

THE LADYKILLERS

UNIMPAIRED by any timid concessions to plausibility, *The Ladykillers* (Rank) emerges as the most consistently ruthless comic fantasy produced by a British studio since *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Rougher and more openly farcical in story and attitude, *The Ladykillers* makes no attempt to duplicate the distinctive and elegant heartlessness of the earlier film. The resemblance is restricted to the way in which a comic idea of splendid, savage absurdity is elaborated in an atmosphere of steadily mounting fantasy. Detached and ironic, the early scenes establish their decidedly individual tone: the little old lady who calls at the local police station to clear up a mystery of her own invention about spaceships in back gardens is a genuine eccentric; her odd little house, a cottage in a back street near King's Cross, appears as another incongruous survival from the past; and the crime into which she is unwittingly drawn by her amiable but sinister lodger, the Professor, is worked out in a burlesque of gangster strategy. The later sequences, after the old lady has discovered precisely whom she is harbouring, develop an extravagant and entertaining ruthlessness, as the gangsters find it simpler to eliminate each other than to take on the impossible job of murdering their hostess.

William Rose's script, his most successful since *Genevieve*, has an agreeable hardness, a streak of sharp malice. And there is apparent, both in the script and in Alexander Mackendrick's spirited and inventive handling, a fine sense of the comic possibilities of the outrageous. The brakes are never applied, the fantasy runs on unchecked to a conclusion which has its own lunatic logicity. In a comedy of this type, one suspects that it is almost impossible to go too far: the macabre humour of the later scenes—the disposal of the corpses via British Railways, the abrupt extinction of the Professor—has a tough inevitability more satisfying than some earlier episodes of slapstick introduced for its own sake.

The comedy, in any case, deals in character as much as situation, and the unlikely little group of criminals take on an existence on their own anti-social terms never achieved, for instance, by the

comic crooks of *Beat the Devil*. The Major (Cecil Parker), a shifty confidence trickster flaunting a crumbling respectability, the nervously violent professional killer (Herbert Lom), the inarticulate thug (Danny Green), the Teddy Boy (Peter Sellers), with his awkward and unexpected ventures into gentility, and the ingratiating and alarming Professor are characters substantial enough for one to feel a certain inappropriate regret at their violent ends. Alec Guinness' playing as the Professor, a beautifully subtle and sophisticated comedy performance with erratic undertones of the authentically sinister, is neatly balanced by Katie Johnson's characterisation of the prim and obstinate old lady. Her triumph over her lodger and his associates—achieved, like the victories of Mr. Magoo, through a sublime disregard for what is actually happening around her—is foreshadowed in the amiably comic scene of a teaparty which brings together the criminals and the elderly ladies of the neighbourhood, with the unwilling guests dragooned into a reluctant sociability. It is this comedy of incongruity—the crooks disguise themselves as an amateur string quintet, concealing their stolen bank notes in their instrument cases—that sustains the picture's pleasantly inconsequential tone. The deliberate set-piece, such as Frankie Howerd's appearance as an outraged barrowboy, upsets momentarily the fairly precarious balance between farce and comedy. Both director and scriptwriter, though, are at the top of their form throughout most of this macabre joke: for a subject offering somewhat similar opportunities, one would like to see them attempt a screen version of *The Wrong Box*, a novel which *The Ladykillers* occasionally echoes in its brusque attitude to sudden death and in the exuberant absurdity of its comic invention.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

In Brief

In *LES DIABOLIQUES* (*Films de France*), one feels, Clouzot found certain elements of situation which absorbed him completely, and this absorption he has fully recommunicated on the screen. As might be expected of the director whose camera dwelt so ardently on the dead Manon's hand sticking out of the desert sands (one of several details cut by the British censor), these elements are gruesome in the extreme. In fact, rarely if ever has such a wallow in the sickeningly macabre been passed for distribution in this country.

The sadistic schoolmaster of a provincial French school (crippling psychosis guaranteed to every boarder) includes among his staff his mistress, whom he beats (we are introduced to her with a black eye), and his wife, whom he has cowed to a frail, neurotic wreck. The mistress proposes to the wife a plan to murder the husband. This is done, and the body deposited in the school swimming pool. When, at the wife's hysterical instigation, the pool is drained, the body is found to have vanished. Evidence accumulates to suggest that the husband—who has been drowned in the bath under our very eyes and even weighted down with a heavy ornament—is still alive.

To disclose more would be unfair. The crime itself is a piece of superior Grand Guignol, but the atmosphere of the school, soggy with sexual perversion as it is, remains passionless—and, ironically, immature in its all-too-knowing Frenchness. Any credible motivation of the final twist demands belief in a violent and obsessive attraction, but this is soft-pedalled to ensure the shock-revelation. The loss in characterisation leaves the essential *fleurs du mal* as very withered blooms indeed.

With so much to hide, any complexity of relationship between the guilty couple is again precluded, although their continued existence at the school forms the middle section of the film. All this remains static and un compelling. No amount of cunning in presentation can disguise the fact that as a mystery story the film is not advancing and as psychological investigation it is mere pretence. The ladies remain as they were first presented, Simone Signoret big and dominating, Vera Clouzot small and harassed. But when the cat is finally let out of the bag, the director rolls up his sleeves, licks his lips, and extorts every ounce of sadistic horror from a situation that would have delighted Edgar Allan Poe. One feels, in fact, the piece might have gained much under cover of a nineteenth century setting. Perhaps there its ironies might have seemed less conscious, and a little less *demodé* the knowing cynicism of its corruption.—DEREK PROUSE.



Master criminal : Alec Guinness in "The Lady Killers"

MR. ROBERTS (*Warners*). Regarded simply as a two-and-fourpenny entertainment (which is all, in the end, it amounts to), this is a patchy diversion, rather padded out, occasionally bright, and finally quite amusing. One had hoped, of course, for more from a film which reunited the talents of John Ford and Henry Fonda, which is adapted from a likeable play, on a theme appealing to Ford. A good deal of the unevenness in the finished product undoubtedly results from the fact that the director fell ill during production, and Mervyn LeRoy took over. Thus most of the exteriors are recognisably Ford's, while the interiors (including some extremely poor studio-shot "exteriors") are slapped mechanically on to the screen with dialogue left far too wordy and the actors just playing away in long, dull CinemaScope group shots.

The playing is generally good, but even Fonda's attested performance fails to add up to anything much—because there is no complementary spirit in the direction. It seems likely that reports of conflict between Ford and Leland Hayward, producer of play and film, are true—the insistence on as literal and comprehensive a version of the theatre production as possible was bound to result in pedestrian film-making. (Suppose Zanuck had imposed similar restrictions on the making of *Tobacco Road*.) One senses, in fact, a fundamental divergence of sensibility under the surface of comedy. *Mr. Roberts* is not at all a happy film, really.—LINDSAY ANDERSON.

IT'S ALWAYS FAIR WEATHER (*M.G.M.*). If the mood of *On The Town* was one of summer gaiety, the mood of this new film, title notwithstanding, is one of wintry disillusion. With Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen again collaborating on direction and choreography, and Betty Comden and Adolph Green on the script, the result seems in many ways a kind of jaded sequel to the earlier film. Once again the action centres on the adventures of three wartime friends, in this case infantrymen, with the difference that their adventures this time take place when they meet again ten years after being demobilised. At this reunion, they find they can no longer stand each other, so changed are they by civilian life; and two of them cannot even stand themselves. Of course, everything turns out all right, but the regeneration is somewhat contrived and the general atmosphere makes one feel that *It's Always Fair Weather* is to *On The Town* as Robbins' *Age of Anxiety* is to *Fancy Free*.

The execution is, quite simply, tired. Kelly's choreography has become increasingly repetitive, and originality now gives place

too often to the frantic search for a new gimmick. Too many of the numbers are forced into the action rather than arising naturally out of it—particularly Cyd Charisse's dance in Stillman's gym (which makes rather unpleasant use of a chorus of punchdrunk fighters) and Dolores Gray's "Thanks, But No Thanks," enjoyable as it is. Significantly the best number is also the most germane—Dan Dailey's drunken, rebellious solo, which has a genuinely mordant quality.

Apart from this—for the satire on commercial TV is generally heavy-handed—Michael Kidd provides the best moments in the picture, revealing a sympathetic, rather Sinatra-ish personality—even though his role is somewhat thankless, and he is unaccountably not permitted a solo dance. Dolores Gray, in her first film, is not very well handled; she is a more gifted comedienne than would appear from her grotesquely overdone portrait of a television star.

All in all the film—especially after *Brigadoon*—sadly disappoints, coming as it does from people who have contributed so much to the revival of the musical. The palm has passed for the moment, indeed, to Richard Quine's *My Sister Eileen*, which (above all in the gaiety, simplicity and freshness of Bob Fosse's choreography) carries on the tradition with a verve that is lacking here.—DAVID VAUGHAN.

TO CATCH A THIEF (*Paramount*) is a romantic thriller interpreted by a cynic, a story of pursuit filmed by a director who no longer quickens to the more elementary excitements of the chase. Allowing the story-line to become blurred and imprecise, Hitchcock and his scriptwriter, John Michael Hayes, have over-dressed a situation initially simple: a former jewel thief, living in placid retirement on the Riviera, is forced into action in order to track down the cat-burglar who is imitating his own distinctive technique. From here, the plot ramifies distractingly, and tentatively explores a series of false trails. And the characters—the reformed thief and the bored, insolent rich girl touring Europe with her mother, a shrewd and cheerful vulgarian—exist only to engage in those verbal fencing matches in which the foils are beginning to appear a little blunt and rusty. In this atmosphere of mannered intrigue, Hitchcock substitutes trickery for excitement; a car chase, beginning on a note of tension, ends on a mild joke; and the hero, escaping from the police through the Nice flowermarket, is instead absurdly cornered by a small angry woman whose stall he has overturned.

One misses the audacious ingenuity that at times enlivened *Rear Window*, although the calculated malicious comment—on the oil-millionairess who stubs out a cigarette in her breakfast egg, or the guests arriving in bejewelled finery for a fancy dress ball—is as usual in evidence. Played with chilly elegance by Grace Kelly and with slightly jaded charm by Cary Grant, the heiress and ex-thief engage in romantic skirmishing up and down the coast from Cannes to Monte Carlo. Intermittently, all this entertains; it is a little disconcerting, though, to find Hitchcock surrendering to Hollywood's current customs in big screen production—there are times when one can hardly see the story for the stars and the scenery.—PENELOPE HOUSTON.

I AM A CAMERA (*Independent*). Sally Bowles began as one of the many characters who make up Isherwood's keen, perceptive picture of early Nazi Germany, *Goodbye to Berlin*. In John van Druten's play she became, with Isherwood himself, a protagonist in a minor drama of character set against a rather less distinct background of Nazi Berlin. Now, in a film adaptation by John Collier, directed by Henry Cornelius, she is the centre of a knock-about farce quite incidentally supposed to take place in Isherwood's Germany. (The only direct evidence of place and time is a very contrived and unlikely incident in which Chris brushes with a group of S.S.)

The plot has been rigged to let Sally talk her way out of the abortion which is a central incident in the play; to make Clive, the rich American, into a major character; to introduce a long and appalling low-comedy orgiastic party; largely to sidetrack the affair of Fritz Wendel and Natalia Landauer (small parts now, but nicely played by Anton Diffring and Shelley Winters); and to bring back a 1955 Sally to engineer a tidier ending than the two postcards and the letter-that-never-came of the original story. On the other hand the film does omit the awful and unlikely mother that the play gave to Sally; and returns to some degree to the stories for a better explanation of Isherwood's relationship with Sally. Perhaps it is this change, as much as Laurence Harvey's meaningless performance, which brings the film Isherwood a step nearer the negative, impersonal observer of the original stories.

In spite of everything, something remains of Sally herself.

Julie Harris played the role on Broadway, and her intelligent understanding of the original character is sufficient to win through. She is extravagantly mannered, never achieves an appropriate accent, and is cast into a milieu quite alien to the real Sally; but with her plain, cunning yet open face and her responsive alertness, she is—much more than Dorothy Tutin ever was on the London stage—the schoolgirl shocker with grubby hands and green fingernails, the would-be whore who is always a bit surprised when it happens. It is a performance of great technical cleverness by an irresistibly accomplished actress. But it is not enough to save this film.—DAVID ROBINSON.

The baby **MARCELINO** (*Films de France*) is found by monks on the doorstep of their monastery, just rebuilt after the Napoleonic wars, and adopted by them. By the age of five he is dominating their lives; and they, of course, love every moment of it. He has pet names for each of the brothers, plays tricks on them, and creates an imaginary companion to satisfy his desire for a friend of his own age. Then, in the forbidden attic, he discovers a figure of Christ on the cross. A miracle occurs, the figure speaks, and Marcelino has a new friend. The miracle continues twice daily, and when the figure asks the child what is his dearest wish, Marcelino replies: "To see my mother and yours." The wish is granted, the child dies, and the attic becomes a place of holy pilgrimage.

Apart from what one may feel about the nature and the intended meaning of the climax, it is not really specific, it conveys no feeling of illumination. It comes strangely, too, after the whimsicality of the rest. For most of its length *Marcelino* is a film of rather pallid charm, like a too delicate etching which could have done with more acid on the plate. Outstanding is the performance of the boy, Pablito Calvo, perhaps the most natural and endearing of its kind since Enzo Staiola's in *Bicycle Thieves*; but, in spite of this, and the admirable restraint of the direction (by Ladislaus Vajda, a Hungarian now settled in Spain after working in various countries, including England, where a few years ago he made *The Golden Madonna*), and the effective black-and-white simplicity of the photography, the general result is plausible rather than convincing.—JEFFREY BERNARD.

BLACKBOARD JUNGLE (*M.G.M.*) investigates the lower depths of the American educational system—a New York vocational trade school—in the strident terms of headline journalism. The earlier sequences, emphasising juvenile gangsterism and a savagely combative resistance to discipline and education in any form, at times suggest authentic dismay and anger, but more often a deliberately hotted-up sensationalism. The resolution, in which the idealistic young schoolmaster puts new spirit into his tired and cynical colleagues, then disarms a hysterical young hoodlum in a classroom knife fight, vindicates the teaching profession at the cost of a disquieting surrender to dramatic improbability. Richard Brooks' direction, aping the Kazan style of mannered naturalism, puts a predictably jagged edge on these melodramatics. Capable performances from Glenn Ford as the tough idealist and Sidney Poitier as a classroom ringleader; standard Brando imitations from the minor delinquents.—P.H.

THE TALL MEN (*Fox*), directed by Raoul Walsh, is a robust and straightforward western which provides some of the most substantial arguments to date for CinemaScope. Vast herds of cattle wander across the prairie or mass for a river crossing; a horseman battles his way through a blizzard; the herd is stampeded into a canyon as the waiting Indians attack. All this is finely vigorous, and for once screen size and subject are in agreement. Less stirring is the human element of the story, with Jane Russell taking an unconscionable time to make up her mind between Robert Ryan, who "dreams big," and Clark Gable who, disconcertingly, "dreams small." Cheerfully determined playing from the stars, notably the indomitable Jane; but it is the outdoor spectacle that counts.—P.H.

Short Films

THE RIVAL WORLD, Bert Haanstra's new documentary in Eastman Colour for the Shell Film Unit, might justifiably be called a scientific "horror" film. This gifted young Dutch director, whose first films, *Mirror of Holland* and *Panta Rhei*, were gentle and abstract, studying water reflections and cloud formations, has now become a ferocious realist. Insects comprise four-fifths of all animal life; and *The Rival World* suggests that their terrible threat to man and nature can only be met by worldwide cooperation on the largest scale.



Giulietta Masina and Anthony Quinn in Fellini's "*La Strada*," previously reviewed in "*Sight and Sound*" and now running in London.

An analysis of the revolting diseases caused by the presence of insects, and some brilliantly shot close-ups in which various specimens are brought disturbingly near, establish the vivid reality of the threat. Location sequences in East Africa and Egypt show something of the scientific methods used in annihilating pests, and it is here, with the aid of some highly expert camerawork and editing, that a really awe-inspiring event is recorded. Discharging insecticide, an aeroplane flies through a massive swarm of locusts; the creatures explode and rattle against the fuselage like bullets in an air attack, and these few moments of violent combat portray the rival world at its most spectacularly malignant. One is left in no doubt that man's counter-attack must be made to succeed. —JOHN GILLETT.

NAKED SEA (*RKO-Radio*). This Pathecolor documentary on a tuna-fishing expedition, directed and photographed by Allen H. Miner (an American World War II combat photographer) contains much fascinating and extraordinary material. There is a brilliantly shot sequence of a catch off the coast of Panama, fish hurtling off the lines into the rack at the rate of one every five seconds; an exploration of the strange Galapagos islands, eruptive volcanoes and clusters of iguana lizards, with an undersea of sinister snakes and devil-fish equally strange; and, generally, a combination of vivid, eye-taking detail and narrative drive that makes the film continually absorbing. The musical accompaniment of guitar and harmonica is also attractive. One regrets only the insistent pseudo-Hemingway commentary. —GAVIN LAMBERT.

THE BESPOKE OVERCOAT (*Romulus*). Wolf Mankowitz has adapted his own one-act play, a Jewish variation on Gogol's theme of "The Cloak" (on which we saw another not so very long ago, by Lattuada in *Il Cappotto*), for this short story film. Transposing the setting to an East End slum, with the protagonist a

shrivelled little warehouse clerk (beautifully played by Alfie Bass), he aims at a piece of contemporary Jewish folklore, something in the style of "The World of Sholem Aleichem." The dialogue has a deliberate idiomatic tang, the backgrounds—the warehouse, the meagre little rooms of Fender the clerk and his friend the tailor (David Kossoff), and a single melancholy street—become almost an abstraction of poverty. Directing his first film, Jack Clayton—formerly known as a producer—shows a firm, sensitive response to the material, and the scene of Fender's death is imaginatively handled. *The Bespoke Overcoat*, which won a prize at the 1955 Venice Festival, is a welcome addition to that rare genre, the short story film of quality. —JAMES MORGAN.

In **ON SUCH A NIGHT** (*Jarfid*), Anthony Asquith (director) and Paul Dehn (scriptwriter) set out on an affectionate though whimsical tour of Glyndebourne, the place itself, its tribal customs (or snobbery), the production and performance of opera there. Although the situation—ignorant American stumbles upon it and ends up loving every moment—is thin (and chosen with an eye on transatlantic tourism?), it is handled with lightness and tact, and Asquith's facility with this kind of thing carries it smoothly through. There is a rather over-emphatic sequence of name-dropping ("Oh, there's Oliver Messel, who does such wonderful designs!"); a charming glimpse of members of the orchestra playing croquet in the interval, with the sound of their musical instruments synchronised to each swipe of the mallet; a nicely filmed sketch of Carl Ebert rehearsing two singers; and extracts from a beautifully sung and set production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. David Knight plays the American pleasantly, and Marie Lohr contributes a masterful portrait of Lady Falconbridge, distinguished habituée with a heart of gold and a very English niece. The film is shot in Technicolor and VistaVision. —JAMES MORGAN.



Star and camel : Dolores Gray as Lalume in "Kismet."

A visit to **KISMET**

ALBERT JOHNSON

CULVER CITY is as sprawling as Los Angeles and is actually an extension of the metropolis, but not especially impressive. One sees the colonial architecture of the Hal Roach and RKO office buildings along Washington Boulevard, but everything else seems to be made of stucco, cream-coloured in the sunlight. In the clear air of summer, the colours of hundreds of automobiles catch the light, and there are very few pedestrians on the streets. There are no tall buildings, other than the Hotel Culver City, a lonely-looking red brick structure which seems to have been built in order to usher in an era that never completely developed. Then behind the maze of telephone and street-car cables, and the car-lots, the light-green buildings of MGM's studios come into view. Seeking an entrance by car is difficult, because the approach to the Main Gate is half-hidden in a fairly narrow side-street ; and the gigantic sign that stands

somewhere in the middle of the lots can no longer be used as a guide, for the neon-head of Leo the Lion disappears behind looming walls.

On the lot, the walls are high, colourless and imposing. I pass no one in bizarre dress or costume. It is all very much like walking between the outer yards of some well-swept laundry plant just before noon. I see signs directing me to various stages, and walk towards Stage 15, where Vincente Minnelli has invited me to watch some of the shooting on his latest musical, *Kismet*. The doors to the sound stages are larger versions of those found on old-fashioned ice-boxes, and after pulling the first one open, I step into a small vestibule, and open another door, and I am on the set. It is about 11.30.

I find myself in semi-darkness, but directly in front of me is the spacious interior of a palace out of the Arabian

Nights ; a group of men, dressed as courtiers in gold lamé and dark brown brocaded costumes, sit on a low stairway, overlooking a vast painted view of ancient Baghdad, its rooftops and towers on a CinemaScopic width of backing ; the sky so alive and blue that one looks for a bird to fly out of its recesses. The men sit close together, absorbed in some activity that could not be anything else but a game of Ganjifa, but as I walk past I see that it is a round of Scrabble. Another group is sprawled against a wall, asleep, and their appearance seems startlingly appropriate to the background, for they are clad in the tattered brown rags of "beggars" and their skin is stained with dark colouring ; they lie inert, in the settled, awkward poses of deep sleepers. I step over them and walk to my right, past half-finished terraces, portable dressing-rooms, their interiors illuminated like miniature models of trailer-homes, everything covered with print chintz. A very large man, in a leathery-looking brown and gold costume, lies on a couch, his eyes staring upward. They rest upon me for a second, then close in a doze. I recognise him as Mike Mazurki.

There seem to be dozens of walls here and there, and thick cables over which I carefully make my way towards some gigantic caves which can be seen up ahead, moulded in jagged brown, and pink-veined in the glow of electric lights. I see some blocked-off areas, small chambers whose floors are covered with huge pieces of cardboard, with reflected light shining through delicately carved archways, light-pink and white structures, with wrought scrollwork and carvings that emulate those of the Taj Mahal, as cool as marble, and as silent. In one of these places, just before I turn toward the set, I see six young women, all beautiful, lying on a large couch, and they laugh and talk together very softly. They are dressed in filmy grey costumes with flashes of gold and flowers somewhere, and their movements make them seem like one mass of fragile humanity, about to disappear into the folds of the couch itself.

The set is here, on the other side of the cave, and here are at least a hundred people standing around under the lights. The wooden structures above, with their crosswalks and huge globes of electric illumination, are populated with electricians, walking about or busy adjusting something or other. The set is all brown, black, yellow and gold, it seems, with a cupola-domed throne sitting near an ornate brass gateway. More "beggars" are sitting on the floor, with chains draped around them, and seated on the throne (ornamented with strikingly carved figures of two cross-armed women, about to fall through space) is a stand-in, draped in a blanket, forlornly gazing at the crowd of people in the middle of the set.

Moving beyond the crowd, I notice Howard Keel, in a scarlet tunic and gold lamé trousers, practising his movements for one of the musical numbers. It is the "Gesticulate" number, rapid in its patter, and it seems to be scored very much as in the original arrangement I heard sung by Alfred Drake. An elderly man sits behind two large turn-tables playing recordings of the sound track—every line of the song appears to have its accompanying gesture, and Keel follows them carefully. The recording has intermittent clicking sounds in it, which probably serve as movement guides or synchronisation cues. The actor gestures and waves his arms about, mouthing the words to the sound track, oblivious to all around him. He stops and says to the sound engineer : "Go back four bars, please," then starts rehearsing again. . . . ("Should Scheherazade/Undulate her body. . . .")

I assume the set is the Wazir's Palace, and the cave walls surrounding the place give it all a stylised, exotic quality, dominated by these black, brown and gold colours, with flashes of muted maroon. Several muscular negroes, in the costumes of the Wazir's guard, remove their elaborate helmets, adorned with thick, black snake-coils, and a slender, glamorous woman in a long blonde wig strolls by, her costume much too ornate for an extra. She looks familiar,

but I cannot place her in my memory. I soon learn that she is Dolores Gray, making her second appearance in a Hollywood musical in the part of Lalume, the Wazir's wife. That she is scarcely recognisable is due to the complete transformation in her appearance during the past decade : the voluptuous, raucous redhead seen years ago on Broadway (*Are You With It?*) has become a languorous, polished Hollywood creature. . . . For the first time I catch a glimpse of Minnelli in the crowd. He is giving instructions to the cameraman (Joseph Ruttenberg) and his crew, pointing here and there. . . . The colour of his canary yellow jacket seems to be brighter than two minarets catching the lights behind the set. One of the assistant directors, a young man named William Shanks, calls for a full camera rehearsal. Minnelli calls out, "Howard, will you just run this rehearsal ?" and as Keel moves towards his place the director says, "All right ? . . . Action !"

The action calls for Keel, as Hajj, the singing poet, to be brought before the Wazir (Sebastian Cabot) in chains, where he is condemned to have his hands cut off. However, Lalume intervenes, and in the ensuing song, "Gesticulate," Hajj sings of the necessity of being allowed to tell a story with the aid of all his digits. The arrangement of the extras in proper perspective makes the sequence a slow one to shoot. The CinemaScope screen *must* be filled. Keel goes through the action three times, which includes being thrown to the floor by Mazurki and Ted de Corsia. Cabot, in benign contrast to his role as Castellani's screaming Capulet, sits patiently upon his throne, smoking a cigarette, while Minnelli mounts the camera, directs its movement, arranging the angles and then checking with Ruttenberg about what is possible. By the time the director and cameraman have worked out the angles, it is noon and everyone is off to lunch.

The assistant director calls out : "The SAG group line up here," and about two dozen men line up according to height—they are being chosen for additional extra work. They are of all ages, from 18 to 50, I suppose, and each one peculiarly reminiscent of another at different stages of life. Looking at their faces is like observing a man's entire life, with each section of it given another life of its own. Some of the men have their backs to me, blocking off their judges from my view. As silence settles, those I can see feign a kind of relaxed indifference, but I can feel the tension of these minutes, like living air behind the caves. A workman sweeps the floor of the set, and I notice its gold and dark purple-red swirls, an odd marble-like effect. . . . ("Now will you step forward, please . . . and yes, the two men on the end step forward. Boys, just look here please . . . the man in the pink shirt step forward. . . .") I see that one man has his fingers crossed behind his back—he is not chosen—and soon most of them are gone.

The sound stage is now almost deserted. I walk towards Minnelli, when my eye is caught by a large garden-set behind the left cave wall, and I wander back there, where tiny willow trees, story-book bridges and artificial grass and flowers surround me. The set is dark, but it must be the one used for the "Stranger in Paradise" duet between Ann Blyth and Vic Damone. I do not really approve of the set somehow, seen now at its worst, unlit and without the proper trappings to bring it to life. It has something of the artificiality of the more unfortunate aspects of the heathered hill in *Brigadoon*. . . . Both Minnelli and his assistant have now disappeared.

I spend most of the lunch hour talking to a studio electrician outside Stage 11 ; listening to his conversation, movieland is thrown back into reality, here in the bright glare of sunlight in Culver City. There is the inevitable sigh on his part, and words spoken with all the impact of thirty years' perspective. . . . "Yeah, I seen a lot of changes round here, lots of 'em," he tells me. "I remember when there was a big street runnin' along here, cars and everything. You don't notice how much is changing all the time until something you come to associate with yourself goes too . . . like today,

they just dropped down a big tree over there, a big pine tree. It was thirty years old, been here ever since I first came . . . I went over and had my picture taken alongside of it before they cut it down." Then the man tells me, "I never get tired, though; there's always something new." "It's a disease," he says, "Like mining . . ."

Back on Stage 15, Molly Kent, the chief script-girl, talks with me about the sets and the production while the cast slowly begins to reassemble, technicians adjust lights and camera. Miss Kent tells me that the sets are by Preston Ames and the costumes by Tony Duquette. Meanwhile the floor of the Wazir's Palace is uncovered and swept, and soon Shanks is calling, "All right boys, let's hit our spots! Four litter bearers, come on. . . !" A woman walks by, leading four beautiful Afghan hounds. The "Gesticulate" number is to be fully rehearsed. Keel comes over to Miss Kent and they go over his lines; and while things are being set up I chat briefly with Minnelli. "I see you have Mr. Ames doing the sets again," I tell him. "Oh, yes," Minnelli answers, relaxed and smoking a cigarette. "I always try to get him for a production if I can . . . it has to be very rich, you know, sets, costumes and all that, and naturally we've tried to keep the flavour of the original show. . . . Have you taken a look at the sets, they're really wonderful? . . . Some of them are on another stage, and the weather's been so bad until today, we haven't been able to do any of our outdoor shooting yet." I mentioned that I was not familiar with Tony Duquette's designs. "You don't know his work?" The director seems surprised. "Well, here he does have an opportunity to do really wonderful things, but I think one of the first things he did was a scene in *Lovely to Look at*, Mervyn LeRoy's film. . . ."

They are ready for rehearsal now. The beggars all sit together in a ragged group, yokes and chains around their necks and arms. Keel has put on a splendid white coat of brocaded silk, adjusts his turban. Still in his yellow jacket, Minnelli has mounted the camera again and calls out instructions. Keel is brought to the Wazir, the camera wheels up swiftly, Minnelli's head engulfed in it. "I order that the right hand of this liar, thief and rogue be cut off!" says Cabot. Keel pleads with him, and flatters Dolores Gray, who peers through the gold-scrrolled openings of her chamber.

The action is stopped and Minnelli coaches Keel and Cabot on points of movement and timing. There is a rest period, costumes are adjusted, Minnelli describes some action to Dolores Gray, the floor is swept again, lights checked, and then Shanks calls: "All right, boys, can we go to number

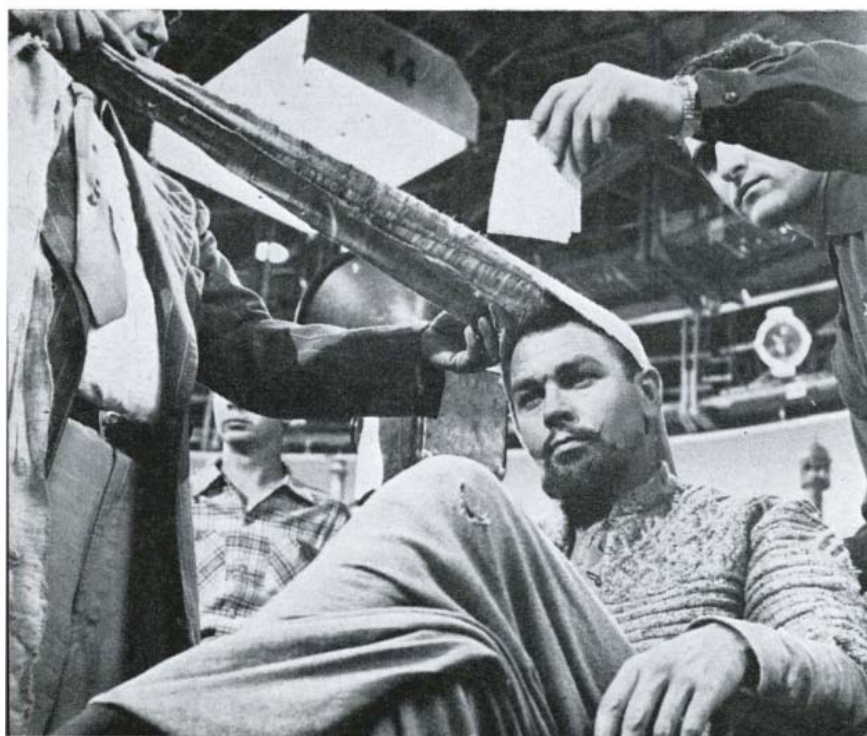
one?" Gray arranges herself in a languid position on a couch, her legs covered by silver lamé trousers, the Afghan hounds at her feet. Keel puts the yoke round his neck and joins the beggars. "Herb, how's the mike?" Shanks asks, and from somewhere in the group a voice says, "Mike's safe. . . ." A silence settles over the stage now. Ruttenberg has mounted the camera and, surrounded by his assistants, waits for the cue from Minnelli. "All right, please," comes another call, "Quiet down for a picture." Minnelli takes a last look at everyone.

"Mr. Minnelli, where do we look?" suddenly asks one of the beggars. "Look down!" the director tells him, sitting in his chair. "Look miserable!" he adds, with a small pleading note in his voice. Then, with a chuckle, he remarks to one of the assistants, "Oh, they look too happy." He sighs resignedly. Several people call out "Quiet!" again, and after a few seconds of silence Minnelli says "Action!"

After the camera rehearsal, they are ready to film. The scene goes well, though once, during Keel's line to Gray, one of the beggars (out of camera range) almost falls over with a clatter of chains and wood, but an electrician catches him and holds him up until after Minnelli has yelled "Cut!" Then the set is cleared and everyone takes a short break, the Wazir's throne is wheeled away. "I guess you thought we'd never get it done," Minnelli says to me with a smile, and lights a cigarette. Then someone calls him away.

A few minutes later I meet Preston Ames, the set designer, a youthful-looking man with white hair. He soon catches my enthusiasm about what I have seen, especially the marble-like textures of these "Persian" walls and chambers. "Yes," he says, touching the wrought pink designs of doorways and windows, "this is the real jewel of the thing—we're all proud of it. It's a new material developed right here in our workshops, called thermal-vinyl plastic, it's an idea developed by a man who's really a genius. His name is Henry Greutert. . . . It's amazing how much can be done with it, why—just about any material you can name can be recreated realistically by this plastic. It's a fluid that is poured. You can just insert your mould, right into it—it behaves a bit like terracotta, and it's so much more durable than plaster, and less expensive. It gives a brilliant effect of semi-illumination—the colour, the texture, the relief, they're all one operation. Plaster goes to pieces—this does not."

I ask him about the huge cinemascopic backgrounds of sky and minarets. We mount a stairway and look at the painting. "Well, the men who worked on this backing have had thorough training in texture and architectural perspective—they have to know, too, what a camera does. . . . It's quite a procedure, we design a backing-sketch form and this goes to the scene department, and about six men will start work on it, drawing and so forth. . . . I ask him now about the elaborate gold doorways, scrolled and shining. "Is it brass?" "No, it's aluminium," Ames replies with a grin, noticing my incredulity. "The aluminium channel was simply done—it's been sprayed with gold paint and polished. It's quite something, isn't it? You know, doing work in design for different pictures is basically a problem of style. I'm a great believer in lack of colour in set design—sometimes people are just lost." I mention the fact that the sets remind me of temples and mosques seen in India and Pakistan, and particularly the Taj. "Oh, yes," Ames agrees at once, and waves his arms about in an encompassing gesture. "Well, if you've seen that architecture, well, it's all affected us in our designs. . . . The patterns, the scrollwork, are right from the Taj Mahal in idea. And in the Wazir's sets, you see, those caves—well, the Ajanta caves influenced us. . . ."



Turbans (averaging three yards in length) were specially designed for "Kismet" by expert Chanan Sohi. Howard Keel is fitted.



Ann Blyth is rehearsed for a dance by choreographer Jack Cole.

"You simply have to develop a pattern throughout a film," he goes on, "whether you're doing it in its own locale, or far afield, your whole interpretation of the script becomes the important thing. You talk with all of the people involved, you pick up thoughts and establish everything step by step, and soon—your plans and your layouts become a model." We walk over to a melange of boards behind some scenery near the caves, and Ames brings out a miniature set from the lower shelf of a table. He explains it is the model they'd worked on for the chase sequence in the palace; director and cameraman used it in working out angles. "An art director has to give the director the kind of set he wants. In *Brigadoon*, now, we had a set which was used basically seven times, with seven different changes. It was in the heather-on-the-hill sequence, with the church and so on. . . ."

Tactfully I ask Ames if all of the filming of *Brigadoon* had been done indoors, being one of those who had so longed for the company to film it outdoors in Scotland. He told me that it was, right down to the opening shot of the wild cattle in the mist. "By the way, they were real Scotch cattle," he adds with a chuckle, "and they had to be housebroken, but all in all they behaved beautifully. When the time came for shooting, they didn't even panic when we had those mists coming over the moors, and when we wanted them to move there was a boy with a peashooter who just let them

have it. . . ." I simply have to ask him why they didn't go to Scotland. "Well, it was definitely considered, but by the time we were ready for it, the season of the year was too unfavourable. . . . I think we succeeded, though, in getting to the spirit of the fantasy, don't you?"

We have wandered back to the Wazir's palace again. The cameras have been rearranged. Minnelli comes over and joins us, and Ames suddenly begins telling him about a new lighting idea he has been working on. "It's what we call 'scotch' lighting, little pinpoints of light, and these can pick up the colour on those minarets in the opening, little by little," he explains. "I think it would be quite unusual." Minnelli leans against the cave wall, his arms folded as he smokes a cigarette, and he listens intently. "Wonderful," he murmurs, "that sounds perfectly wonderful. I'd like to see it as soon as you get it worked out." And for a moment we all start to imagine a mysterious lighting-effect as dawn breaks over Baghdad. . . .

II

The afternoon's work is to be taken up with the beginning of the musical portion of "Gesticulate." Patterns of action and closeups are being studied and run through. Dolores Gray plays her scene, in closeup, looking through the gate's scrolls and curves, and Minnelli is pleased. Her voice has

much more depth now, with a blues quality in it that I had not expected. The grillwork is sprayed; Gray's makeup retouched by her assistant; Minnelli looks through the CinemaScope "viewer" and confers with Shanks on possibilities of movement for Keel in this section of the number.

I approach and greet Jack Cole, the dancer and choreographer. He is sitting under two minarets, his chin resting on his left hand, fairly dejected. With his knitted sweater, russet-hued, his white shirt open at the neck, he resembles a worried-looking junior executive, Harvard '35, who has dressed in his college outfit again for the annual reunion and is irrevocably bored by everything. He is bored by me as well, but soon starts to shrug off his lethargy by speaking. "No," he answers my question, "there's no difference between the dances in the picture and the way they were done in New York. In fact, some of the same dancers from the New York production are in this—the little Ababu girls, for instance, you know—the three princesses." Keel comes over, eating and drinking: "Hey, Jack, how about going over some of these gestures, just check 'em a little bit?" Still holding a container in one hand, he sits on the steps and mumbles the lyric, twists and spins his free hand in all sorts of contortions. Cole watches, without moving his chin from his hand, and finally says "Great" in a monotone, just as Keel is called back to the set. Then he rubs his eyes, looks at me, and with a strangely sardonic smile says: "I can tell you one thing. I've *had* the Far East!" It is quite funny to hear him say this. "Oh? . . ." "First the San Francisco opening," Cole goes on, "then New York, then London, and now . . ." His hands slump to his knees. "I've *had* the Far East."

I ask him how many of the dance numbers are being used from the stage production. "All," he says. "All of them from the show. But that's not the biggest problem. Sometimes CinemaScope is not very helpful—one has to get too far away from the dancers, you can't always get the intimacy, the feel of a dance, when you've got so much of this or that to get into the picture as well. A lot of your dance action is motivated by the camera. And it all depends, too, on whom you have to work with." A man comes up to Cole and asks

him about Gloria, a dancer who was accidentally hit in the nose this morning during a rehearsal. . . . I move away to watch the shooting.

Keel has taken off his turban and wig. "We do an over-shoulder here," says Minnelli to two of the Wazir's guards, who pick Keel up between them and hoist him shoulder-high. "Now you let him down—*now*, the part I want is—they bring you to the block, Howard. . . ." And he goes through the action, step by step, rehearsing it with camera angles, revising areas of movement and entrance. "Hold! I'd like to hear a little more!" is one of the chief cues, sung by Dolores Gray, for the music here announces the entrance of two litter-bearers, with a divan for her to fall upon. The scene is rehearsed with the sound track, interrupted, rehearsed again. "When you tell a story, amorous or gory, you can tell it best if you ges-tic-u-late!" Keel is singing again and again. There are areas of the stage shrouded by the rocks of the caves—and from the gold-swirled steps where Ann Blyth will soon be singing "This is my Beloved," I can see electricians overhead conversing amid the unlit globe-eyes of lights and wooden scaffolds.

The atmosphere is uncanny—even after everyone stops at six-thirty, and lights begin to be snapped off. Crowds of people move out towards the other end of the stage. Beautiful and smiling, Mrs. Minnelli arrives. She and her husband walk arm in arm out into the sun, her yellow sweater the same colour as his jacket. This is not like going home from any other job in the world. It is just as unreal as I had supposed, but much more fatiguing—like mining. . . .

In the projection room I see two excerpts from the film. In the first, a short bit of the Wazir's entrance into his court, I find that the browns and golds of the decor possess a deeper richness, a subtler merging of colour that seems to seep into texture of the film itself. In the second, the "Baubles, Bangles and Beads" number, the market-place is out of a never-never land, lightly tapestried with orientalia. Brocades and silks, glitteringly opulent, rich orchestrations, singing Arabs and blackamoors offering pearls to Ann Blyth—golds, reds and blues flow across the screen, and then, from behind a saffron swath of material, the once-ragged heroine emerges resplendent, singing of dreams and precious stones.



Vincente Minnelli (centre) directs Ann Blyth and Vic Damone in the "Stranger in Paradise" number, with Persian garden setting.

Conversation with Hitchcock

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE

STRAIGHTENING out the zigzag course conversations are apt to take, especially when prompted by questions, I find that in the main my talk with Alfred Hitchcock after the London premiere of *To Catch a Thief* covered two subjects: the combination of realism and fantasy, and the difference of opinion between himself and certain critics about the existence of metaphysical elements in his work.

Melodrama, Hitchcock said, breaks the bounds of realism in much the same way, if not to the same extent, as ballet—the kind, that is, where the performers “dance characters.” For him all melodramas are a form of fantasy. There is, in his own films, usually a documentary germ, taken perhaps from the shelves of the *Surêté*, Scotland Yard or the New York Police Department. “You take something ordinary to start with, but you have to whip it up into colour. And you give it the colour of melodrama chiefly by choice of situation. It’s all very fine to talk of the action being motivated by the characters, but because of the difficulties in constructing a screenplay, what in fact happens is that you make it *appear* so. In thrillers it’s the situations that matter most, and their originality. People often ask me how I get offbeat effects. Here’s an example. The other day I thought: ‘Wouldn’t it be fun to open a mystery in a big motor plant in Detroit—shiny new cars coming off the assembly line, and at the wheel of one of them . . . a dead body.’ Well. . . . It’s vivid, it’s offbeat. And I haven’t the vaguest idea whether it’ll ever develop into a story, or fit into a picture I make. But I’ve just used an idea I had seventeen years ago, turning it into a new opening for my remake of *The Man Who Knew too Much*—my only remake, incidentally.” (Hitchcock’s reason for remaking this picture is that the American public never saw it.)

The ending of *To Catch a Thief*, originally planned by Hitchcock himself, was one of the more curious instances of an idea developed by him from a “documentary germ.” Talking one day with the head of the Homicide Department in New York, he overheard an officer in telephone conversation with a wanted man, who had just been located; the officer was agreeing quite amiably to allow this man to give himself up on the following Monday (this was a Saturday) so that he should not have to break his weekend date with a girl. This struck Alfred Hitchcock as so delightfully bizarre that he modelled a scene on the incident. It was to follow the moment when the thief, hanging by her hands from the edge of the roof, is caught, and would have shown her and her accomplice casually agreeing to be arrested—when, in a couple of days’ time, they were ready. “It would have



The Man who knew too much . . .

made an amusing payoff,” Hitchcock said, “but it would also have deflected the story, and at this stage the spectator would want to know what happens to the principal characters. Besides, it might have seemed incredible. Very often the truest things appear too far-fetched. If you’re an observer of life as a whole, of the oblique, the not-quite-on-the-nose, you come to accept the fact that it’s no good showing certain things as they are—people just wouldn’t believe them.”

A good thriller, he went on, should be like a switchback; the spectator is taken along, up and down, so that, identifying himself with the hero, he is mentally levitated from his seat and has to grip the edges. “The whole art of movie-making is based on the audience’s identification with the people on the screen—that’s why, whatever you show, reality or fantasy, it must *seem* credible.” *To Catch a Thief*, he said in answer to a question of mine, is a woman’s picture. Not that he sets out to make films specially for either men or women, but since his arrival in Hollywood he has realised that it would be foolish not to take into account the fact that the majority of cinema audiences are women. “It’s important that film-makers should have a sense of responsibility for the stability and continuity of their industry. . . . And if sometimes you have to make corn, try at least to do it well.”

When Hitchcock was in France, shooting exteriors for *To Catch a Thief*, articles about him were constantly appearing in the press; “*Les Cahiers du Cinéma*,” indeed, devoted the whole of its October, 1954, issue to his work. “I wouldn’t on principle discourage analytical writing,” Hitchcock said seriously, then gave a roguish smile, “but I must admit that some of those articles made me wonder—‘is this really me they’re discussing?’” If, as was suggested, he introduces a Roman Catholic argument into his work, this is, he says, instinctive rather than deliberate. Certain critics, for instance, were under the impression that his villains are usually given opportunities for confession. “It depends on the circumstances,” he remarked about this. “You see, I’m not particularly interested in villains. I believe that most criminals are really sick people; they’re born that way; they can’t help it. I don’t really go into their psychology



"a sort of 'thing' about being tied up . . ." Madeleine Carroll and Robert Donat in "The 39 Steps".

much in my films." And, though a practising Roman Catholic (educated at St. Ignatius College by Jesuits, from whom it was that he "learnt, among other things, to be realistic"), he does not purposely bring religion into them either.

There is, however, nothing new in believing that he does. In *The Lodger*, made in 1926, there is a scene showing a man, who has been hanging for hours by his handcuffed wrists from an iron railing, being taken down in a state of collapse. "It's just possible," Hitchcock said, "that I made some passing reference to the effect that this figure resembled

Christ's when being taken down from the cross. But the scene was not intended to suggest this. Nevertheless, one of the newspapers thought that it did. No—what interested me was the drama of being handcuffed. There's a special terror," he said, "a sort of 'thing' about being tied up, haven't you noticed? The classic line when somebody in a melodrama is about to be handcuffed goes: 'Oh no, Inspector, not that, please!' And the answer: 'We must—this is a serious case.' I've often exploited this situation," he added. "In *The 39 Steps*, of course, it was fundamental. . . ."

THE SEVENTH ART



Patrons at the Tooting Granada this week can, without the consequences of medical expense, split their sides with laughter or have hysterical convulsions while watching Norman Wisdom's latest success, *Man of the Moment*. This . . . is brought about by manager Ken Brierley's decision to insure the physical well-being of his patrons for £10,000 with Lloyds during the week that Wisdom's comedy plays.—*ToDay's Cinema*.

Because I like happy endings, I always leave the cinema when I suspect the hero or heroine is about to die. So I don't know if Jim Bowie survived in *The Last Command*.—Letter to *Picturegoer*.



There are some who fear Fred Zinnemann, who directed (*Oklahoma!*), made several mistakes—the brothel should not have been so obvious in one of its dance sequences, the character of Jud should not have been so pathologic, and lesbian-looking things should not have been allowed to flit about and attitudinize. After all, *Oklahoma!* was intended to make people feel happy.—*Films in Review*.



A child watching a film at the Essoldo Cinema, Stockton-on-Tees, threw a piece of toffee at the villain. It hit the screen. Result: the entire screen has had to be replaced this week at a cost of £499 10s.

. . . Now there is a new notice in the cinema reading: "If you must throw toffees don't throw them at the screen."—*Reynolds News*.



During the last 12 months Mrs. Constance Cooper, of Rose Avenue, South Woodford, has answered 2,000 wrong number calls—because an error in the telephone directory gives the number of a cinema as Wan. 0255—her number—instead of 0256. Cinema inquiries have called Mrs. Cooper from her bed, from her bath, spoiled her cooking, interrupted her when she is watching her favourite TV programmes. So each week Mrs. Cooper looks up the titles of the films showing and notes the times and the certificates. "I find it much quicker to recite the information than to explain the situation," said Mrs. Cooper. Last week was a record. The film was *The Dam Busters* and Mrs. Cooper had 200 calls.—*Evening Standard*.



Dynamic Frame

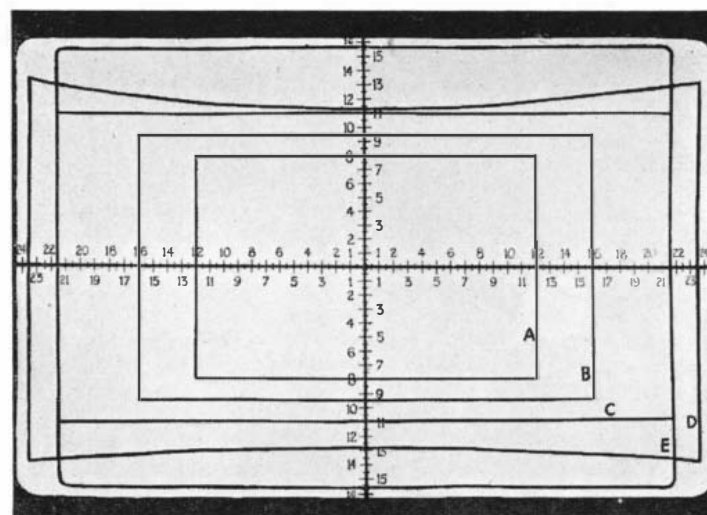
Above : "The Door in the Wall." Use of vertical frame. Right : Some horizontal screen shapes used in the Dynamic Frame. A : Small frame. B : Medium frame. C : Large frame. D : Limit of Vista-Vision curvilinear screen. E : Limit of 35 mm. screen. The black masking surrounds the total VistaVision negative area.

SIMPLE solutions are the hardest to find. When recently—and for the first time in its history as a commercial enterprise—the screen developed new shapes, the ardent controversies that followed made it difficult to arrive at a thoughtful analysis of the various compositional ratios. Just as at the advent of sound the addition of an unexploited, unpredictable element set back the hard-won mastery over form and technique, so when the new screens arrived it was felt by many people that twenty-five years was hardly long enough to exhaust the possibilities, to develop all the refinements of the talking picture on the 4.3 screen.

We have now gained a certain perspective. It is impossible to deny, for example, CinemaScope's superiority above all other shapes in the presentation of a scene like the great cattle trek in *The Tall Men*; it is equally impossible to deny that a thirty-foot wide table for two can never spell intimacy in the manner of the small screen. VistaVision (especially on the new enlarged screen) has nearly as much spectacular effect as CinemaScope, and a good deal more flexibility for dramatic narrative. Even so, there are parts of *To Catch a Thief* in which it all seems, simply, too big. In fact each shape has its assets and shortcomings, and no one shape can encompass everything. The Dynamic Frame is the first attempt to rectify these difficulties and it also reveals some interesting new advances of its own.

This new process has been realised by Glenn Alvey, the young American whose short film, *Help!* was reviewed in the summer issue of SIGHT AND SOUND. He succeeded in interesting the British Film Institute's Experimental Committee and Associated British-Pathé in the possibilities of his idea, and was jointly advanced the facilities to shoot a short test film, with Howard Thomas as producer. Alvey scripted an adaptation of H. G. Wells' story *The Door in the Wall*, which seemed to him to afford the necessary varied scope for demonstration. He shot it in VistaVision and Technicolor in ten days, and it will be seen in London in a few weeks' time.

The Dynamic Frame permits an image of varying size, dictated by the expositional or atmospheric needs of the story. This is effected by two sets of movable *mattes* controlling height and width; three main subdivisions of the VistaVision screen are employed in *The Door in the Wall*, with the action concentrated within the medium size screen—so that subsequent variations in size, larger or smaller, may impose the maximum effect. (A director working in this method will have to plan the size and shape of each image before shooting—size and spatial relations between people and objects now assuming a fresh dramatic eloquence.) The film is processed with the areas of discarded space already blacked-out in the camera, and demands no adjustments for projection. (A process presumably aimed at





Above and right: The effect of "kinaesthetic space." A scene from "The Door in the Wall" changes character according to its vertical or horizontal frame.

similar ends was the French *Mobilia*, with which Autant-Lara experimented in the late 20's, requiring a variable projection lens and considered impractical for widespread adoption. Eisenstein, lecturing in Hollywood in 1930, proposed a square screen on which images of varying size were to be projected. Earlier, D. W. Griffith's use of the "iris" was a declaration of the need for variation even within the small screen.)

II

One's first reaction on seeing *The Door in the Wall* is one of amazement at the unobtrusive manner in which the method can be worked. In fact one reacts less to the changing shape of the screen than to an awareness of the more highly charged nature of the space employed. There is complete precision in the visual emphasis on important action and detail—as the screen enlarges to embrace a speaker out of camera range, for example, or opens up vertically to encompass a small child staring up in wonder at a tall tree. The manner in which the changes are made can powerfully determine mood; when the child opens the little door and advances into the magic garden, the slowly expanding view becomes subjective and conveys astonishment and strangeness.

At this experimental stage it is worth underlining the unsensational nature and aims of the process. Its vital and perhaps revolutionary advance is the elimination of meaningless space, and the consequent refinement in significance of the remainder. For the screen can narrow down to an intimate close-up as surely as it can suddenly expand. This said, the secondary sensational aspects of the technique can be explored. The power to impose dramatic shock is

enormous, and could clearly—in the hands, say, of a Hitchcock—be used to shattering effect. At one point in *The Door in the Wall* the child, wandering in the garden, sits down on what—in the small-size frame—one takes to be a garden seat. He starts up violently; and the screen, expanding to full size, swiftly reveals that he has sat on the foot of a huge monster.

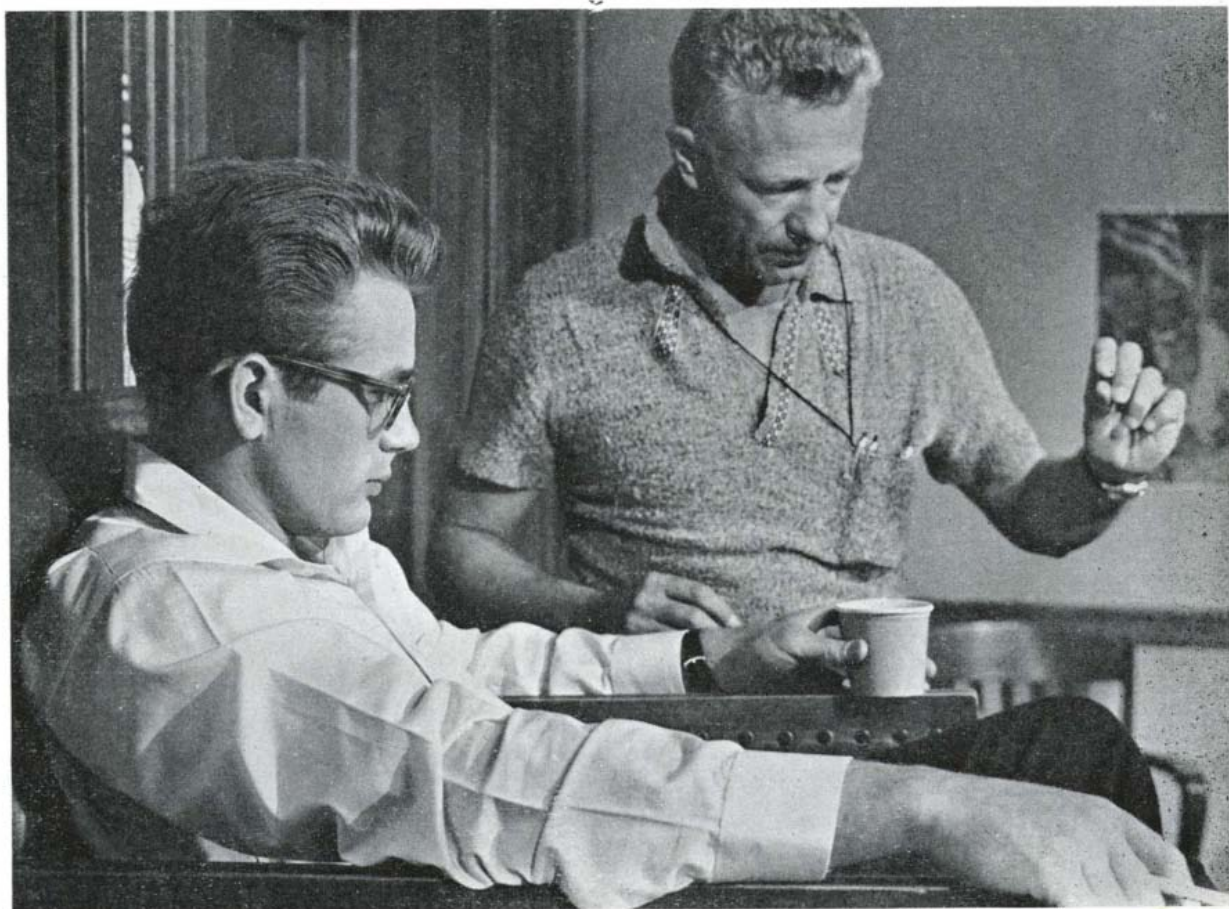
The greatest dramatic possibilities of the process seem to lie, after this first essay, in a new conquest of space. Hurrying to school, the boy runs down a narrow alley—and its narrowness becomes, at this moment, the screen's width. The quality of *narrowness* is kinaesthetically experienced in a way new to the screen. At the beginning of a CinemaScope picture, the feeling of breadth is strong; but it wears off after a reel or two. The Dynamic Frame offers a *feeling of space* as a constant aid to dramatic exposition.

Predictions are rash, but it seems very probable that the Dynamic Frame will prove a means of restoring to the screen a spatial eloquence which has, in many cases, become lost or merely intermittent. The small screen can appear vast when necessary, but the large screens, as they now stand, can never achieve the intimate spatial effects of the smaller ones. There is no doubt that, to have any valid meaning, the new process must involve the writer at an early stage, since it fundamentally affects the structure of his script—to decide suddenly to shoot an existing script "in Dynamic Frame" would probably be to invite chaos. Argument will begin, too, on the extent of its possibilities, on the kinds of story which this spatial eloquence can benefit, and for which it might merely be a distraction. But one should remember, too, that it is used—for demonstration purposes—in more concentrated fashion in this 30-minute film than it might be in many features. (One can imagine the image-size varying from half-a-dozen to sixty times during a 90-minute film.) The process would probably contribute little to a western, or to any genre in which the background needs to be steadily evocative rather than itself dynamic; but it opens up exciting possibilities for the musical, for fantasy, for melodrama; it might momentarily interrupt the concentrated exposition of a psychological drama to strong effect—used subjectively, or to emphasise symbols. Finally, it gains additional importance by arriving after CinemaScope and VistaVision; for it is, by its very nature, a reminder that there exists a whole range of intimate atmosphere and dramatic subtlety that only the smaller screen can accommodate. You might call it an imaginative bid for both worlds. Not only does it bring its new discovery, but it preserves flexibility while not denying itself the excitements of grandeur, it can employ dramatic cutting as well as the steady panorama.

DEREK PROUSE.



Rebel Without a Cause



Script conference : James Dean and Nicholas Ray during the filming of "Rebel Without a Cause"

THOUGH its subject is social maladjustment, *Rebel Without a Cause* (Warners) deserts traditional territory and sets its story among the well-to-do; the wild ones here are college boys and girls from "ordinary," comfortable small-town families. The sins of their children are unsparingly loaded on to the shoulders of these "ordinary" parents, who—lacking the emotional balance to permit a healthy assumption of responsibility—are shown as disastrously over-compensating along certain emotional channels, hysterically evasive before others. By extension the film is prepared to fault, on a serious level, the decadent nature of various patterns in American family life: not only in the obvious breakdowns of divorce, but in achievements commonly accepted as well-meaning and satisfactory. The deficiency of the browbeaten father is firmly pointed, the mother's sacred leadership and intelligence questioned, and at one moment her son's foot is placed squarely through her portrait.

Unlike *Blackboard Jungle* and others, this film does not present a plea for understanding through the hero's climactic appeal or the judge's eloquent peroration. In dramatising his Freudian contentions, Nicholas Ray sometimes over-simplifies (particularly the parental relationships), but in much of his observation some new, vital and disturbing experiences are put on the screen. The ruthlessness his film brings to American family life reminds one of the same studio's descriptions of gang warfare in its famous melodramas of twenty years ago; and even the parallels of gangsterdom seem, at many points, apt.

Three teenagers in varying ways victims of their parents' weaknesses are the central characters. Jim, son of a domineering, emotionally blackmailing mother and a hopelessly flabby father; Judy, unbalanced by her father's rejection of her in favour of her young brother; and Plato, who lives apart from his divorced parents and is given to violent acts of destruction. At school, their shared estrangements draw Plato to Jim, and Jim to Judy. The script (by Stewart Stern, from Nicholas Ray's story) neatly catches the world of school in all its merciless hostility towards its "different" members—a world of sniggers and shared jokes, and the superiority of "belonging." Antagonism springs up between Jim and Buzz, Judy's aggressive boy-friend, and after a knife fight

(heavily cut by the censor here) which leaves their supremacy unresolved, they agree to meet later for a "chicken run"—a trial of courage whereby each drives a stolen car as near as possible to the edge of a cliff, the winner being the last to leap free. Buzz is trapped in his car and goes over with it.

Jim's relationship with his parents is, for the purposes of the film, sustained on a tensely externalised level; it is quickly, openly stated, and allows no expression of human cunning in the matter of hiding up a longstanding, basic rot. Only a superb interpretation could have given this the texture of a deeply corrosive, psychic disorder, and James Dean (whose second film this was), magnificently achieved it. His talent had, very early, acquired a controlled and highly selective expression, and here there is hardly a single miscalculated stress. The eyes, withdrawn and undeceived; the inflexions at once relaxed and bitter in their denial of all expectation; the awkward grace of youth, and the moments of eruptive conviction that somewhere, something is hideously wrong outside himself. Drawn equally to the life of his own generation and to a superior instinctual world of the spirit, he drifts—recoiling on the one hand from the cruelties of other adolescents, on the other from the stifling claims of his parents. The actor movingly captures the conflict in all its multiple evasions, betrayals, sudden giggling releases of tension, and agonised deadlock, and achieves a genuinely poetic account of a modern misfit. There is a fine climactic scene when, having agreed to the "chicken run" test to satisfy his generation's code of honour, he turns to his parents in a desperate appeal for guidance. But he is not understood; and, unaided, he feels unequal to the rebellion and the persecuted isolation that must follow.

After the fatal car crash, the scene in the deserted house where the three youngsters decide to hide is perhaps the director's and the actors' most subtle triumph. Escape from the hostile world, and a momentary return of freedom and irresponsibility, is expressed in a wild night game in the overgrown garden and the empty swimming-pool. Flights of fancy, unselfconscious make-believe, all the easy wingings of young fantasy are delicately caught—yet edged

(continued on page 164)

Television

WITH the start of independent television, both the BBC and its rivals made quite clear their militant attitude towards competition. There were declarations of cold hostility on both sides, but the BBC has continued very much as before: often very good, seldom really bad. Independent television, on the other hand, has displayed in its programmes all the schizophrenic range between the Blightyesque *TV Times* and *The Authority* itself—the body of august personages who appeared, sagely poised about a gracious drawing-room, in a picture on the front of *The Sunday Times* of September 18th. It is at its worst when money is being given away: in *People Are Funny*, when the audience is persuaded to sell dignity and pride, to suffer horrible embarrassment and humiliation for the sake of a few pounds; or in *Take Your Pick*, in which people are offered an odds-on gamble (in the event much more vicious than if it were odds-against) of winning expensive prizes. It is bad enough when Fred Henry is patronising the children, or when the newsreader is at pains that no one shall miss the suppressed twinkle in his dead-pan announcement of some item about Princess Margaret. It is at its best in the intelligent and unrestrained vigour of *Free Speech* or *Round the World with Orson Welles*.

The best test of the independent programmes is whether the commercials come as an interruption or as a relief. More often it is the latter; after eight weeks the majority are still in the stage of the most elementary cinema advertising. A few, however, can hold their own as entertainment. The best are generally the cartoons, notably the little dramas about people who, in the direst emergencies, insist on finishing their Murraymint—"the too-good-to-hurry mint." The best of the acted commercials are so far Surf's endearing series *Meet Mrs. Bradshaw*, Shell's *Discovering Britain* (with John Betjeman), and a monologue about Mansion Polish, by Irene Handl.

Apart from the commercials, however, there is not much to choose between the two channels. Both rely extensively on filmed serials. Every BBC panel game has its ITV counterpart, except for the inimitable *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral*, which after three years still offers the phenomenon of archaeologists providing one of the most successful of the country's weekly entertainments.

Significantly, drama has developed more slowly than any other branch of television—real dramatists are not as easy to come by as the craftsmen who can provide the major part of television entertainment. The only appreciable change due to competitive television is an increasing use of *filmed* drama. This means little to the viewer, except that he may expect fewer hitches, forgotten lines, bumps, bangs and pasteboard interiors. But the smoothness only emphasises the painful truth that many television plays are in conception and treatment inferior to the average British second-feature film. There are exceptions of course. The BBC's cycle of four plays, *The Makepeace Story*, was the usual cotton saga—Gradgrind, Sybil and clogs-to-clogs—but it was well written (by Frank and Vincent Tilsley) and handsomely presented. ITV's *A Garden by the Sea* (from James' *The Aspern Papers*) was poorly staged but beautifully acted by Rosalie Crutchley and Mary MacKenzie. Three negligible plays filmed for ITV gained remarkably from intelligent compression and excellent performances: *A Question of Fact* (with Edith Evans), *Frolic Wind* (with Helen Haye and Joyce Carey) and *Fair Passenger* (with Avice Landone). Traditionally the most difficult of their sort, short plays—of twenty or thirty minutes—are so far the most conspicuous failure of television drama. The fault is always the same—exclusive concentration on building up a situation, and complete neglect of climax and conclusion.

Even though the difference between filmed or live television is of small moment to the viewer, the first weeks of competitive television have confirmed the development of interesting new approaches to the use of film. Television proper has developed a camera and editing technique which can be likened to sketching



Laurence Harvey and Margaret Leighton in "A Month in the Country," filmed for Associated ReDiffusion by Robert Hamer, to be reviewed in our next issue.

with charcoal. An example of this was the BBC's televising of a stage performance of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The broad simplicity of the camerawork, and the demands of following a continuous performance not primarily planned for televising, gave the presentation a pace and freshness rare in films or on television and something of this broader, less fastidious technique has found its way into filmed productions.

More important is the approach to the camera as an instrument of reportage. Again the lesson seems to come from the television treatment of live action, when the cameras are limited to following the timing of actual events, with no possibility of a newsreel style of dramatisation by compression. The discovery here is that the film can, with great success, record people or events at leisure, without rapid, "cinematic" editing. For example, in the BBC's film of Gordon Craig's recollections of Irving, the camera concentrated exclusively on the marvellous face of the sly old seer, as he phrased out his familiar descriptions of *The Bells* and his appraisals of Irving's work. Only occasionally was the film cut, and then, presumably, only for reasons of technical convenience. The result was a precious record of two remarkable personalities. Clever interviewers like Orson Welles and Max Robertson, too, have shown that ordinary or exceptional people—lorry-drivers and waitresses, pastrycooks and old women—are interesting enough to record in this undramatised, barely edited manner.

The trial of this kind of reportage came in the third of the BBC's *Special Enquiry* Series—*Britain's Teenagers*. The treatment—interviews with Teddy-boys, a model, a student, a schoolgirl—was simple, but the material was of unparalleled quality. It had been collected by Dennis Mitchell, who has since been appointed controller of all North Regional sound and television feature and documentary programmes. Some time ago, Mitchell presented four remarkable sound broadcasts, *People Talking*; and in this television programme he revealed the same extraordinary ability to persuade people into acute self-revelation. Himself quiet, unaffected, soft-voiced, only Mitchell could tell the arts with which he achieves this; how he persuades parents into conclusive self-condemnation; how he stung a cheery, cooperative Teddy-boy to a near-tearful and unconvicted assertion that he was very happy and why didn't he leave him alone; and how he won the chilling, hesitant, adenoidal voice of an unconvicted nineteen-year-old cosh-boy to say, in reply to a question whether he was sorry for the injuries he had done an old woman; "Why should I be sorry; nobody's *never* been sorry for me." Television used like this, at an overwhelming best, more than atones for every terrible minute spent watching even the horrors of dimpled Liberace ("Paderewski told him to drop his first name and to share his talents with the world"), *People Are Funny*, or the private life of the Pickles.

DAVID ROBINSON.

Correspondence

When is a poet not a poet ?

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

SIR,—Your Autumn editorial on John Ford, although a little clearer than some previous articles on this director, does little to help understand the basic enigma of his work. Even Ford's most ardent admirers deprecate and find excuses for his commercial films on the one hand, and afford him the highest praise for his more "personal" films on the other. I am not at all sure whether this distinction ("*Ford's method . . . has been to achieve occasional personal freedom at the expense of accepting a great many routine assignments*") is at all valid. It pre-supposes (a) that Ford accepts routine assignments as such and that (b) that he makes a conscious separation between his commercial and "personal" work.

We have on record (SEQUENCE 14) Ford's own statement: "*I was ordered to do They Were Expendable*"; he enjoyed making *Wee Willie Winkie* and he likes *The Lost Patrol*. These statements show fairly conclusively that both the above pre-suppositions are invalid. "*I take a script and just do it,*" seems to be the key to the whole matter, for his script control is only supervisory and therefore the visuals are his most important contribution. Yet there is a visual similarity in all Ford's pictures, the great and the abysmal, in other words he takes the same care over all his scripts with the proviso, "*sometimes I get a story that interests me more than others.*"

In fact the real truth would appear to be that Ford has no real literary taste at all. What he has got is a certain intuitive sense of cinema, probably a product of his long years of training in the silent days. This last, combined with a good script and a competent cinematographer can produce masterpieces; when either or both of these is lacking he can produce the horrors of *The Lost Patrol*, *Mogambo*, *The Quiet Man* and *The Long Gray Line*.

Ford's work sometimes has a simple visual poetry but it is probably produced entirely unconsciously and is constantly threatened by the ogre sentimentality. That parts of some of John Ford's films do attain a certain elementary poetry does not warrant him the label "poet."

Yours, etc.,
IAN C. JARVIE.

10 St. George's Avenue,
Tufnell Park, N.7.

"Glinka" and "Glinka"

SIR,—I feel that I must not let the footnote on page 85 of the Autumn issue of SIGHT AND SOUND go uncorrected—especially in view of the current interest in the work of Lev Arnstam.

You state that his biographical film *Glinka* has never been exported. This is not true as I myself, together with a handful of other members of the general public saw this truly outstanding film at the West End cinema in Birmingham about one year ago.

The film was in first-class colour, with wonderful choral, orchestral, as well as piano music, on the sound track. Some beautifully composed exterior shots and, above all, a montage sequence of shots of Liszt playing in a concert hall, intercut with the composer travelling to the concert on a sleigh with an orchestral background of the same piece of music; sheer exciting cinema which I have never seen bettered—truly in the Eisenstein tradition. It is a film which has been and always will be an outstanding event in my memory.

With the present more cordial international atmosphere, perhaps it would now be possible to obtain this meritorious film for public exhibition in London, or at least the National Film Theatre.

Yours, etc.,
A. J. M. COLLINS.

48 America Lane,
Haywards Heath,
Sussex.

There is a confusion of Glinkas here. The *Glinka* to which Mr. Collins refers was directed by Alexandrov and photographed by Tisse in 1952. It received a limited distribution in this country. Arnstam's film of the same title, made a few years earlier, was not shown here.—Editor.

"The Film and the Public"

SIR.—I feel that John Wilcox's criticisms of Roger Manvell's book *The Film and the Public* are less than fair, since he neglects to take into account the public for which the book is intended. He charges Dr. Manvell with being "incorrigibly sound in his judgments" and with saying "all the right things about the right films." A Pelican book intended for the great mass of ordinary filmgoers should not, in my view, confuse its readers with individual and controversial assessments of films different from those to be found in the standard textbooks.

Surely, the faults of which Mr. Wilcox complains are the most praiseworthy aspects of Dr. Manvell's book. His first Pelican probably did more to spread real film appreciation among ordinary people like myself in the immediate postwar years than any other single volume. His personal influence on later developments as critic, lecturer and guide will prove no small one when it is finally assessed, and it is good to know that it continues to be exerted on such a wide scale.

Yours, etc.,
A. W. HODGKINSON.

Film Appreciation Officer,
British Film Institute,
4 Great Russell Street,
London, W.C.1.

Orson Welles

SIR,—I am writing a biography of Orson Welles and would be grateful for the help of any of your readers who may possess relevant material such as letters, reviews, articles, cuttings, photographs or personal reminiscences.

All material will be copied and promptly returned. Acknowledgment will be given in the book itself.

Yours, etc.,
PETER NOBLE.

72 Wellington Court,
N.W.8.

After Quine—Stone ?

SIR,—I am delighted that SIGHT AND SOUND has drawn attention to the work of director Richard Quine and would like to suggest that a similar evaluation be given to another little-known and equally interesting talent—Andrew Stone.

Directing and scripting his own films he has from *The Steel Trap* to his current *The Night Holds Terror* given to the thriller a tension, and an admirable understanding of character that merit attention.

Or do I rate him too highly ?

Yours, etc.,
KENNETH HOARE.

106 South Hill Park,
Hampstead, N.W.3.

The "Moonfleet" Mystery

SIR,—Surely Fritz Lang's *Moonfleet* is the most "adapted" of all filmed novels. Intrigued by the sketchy treatment of the fascinatingly wicked characters, and presuming that Meade Falkner's original would tell all, I read it . . . with pleasure but complete astonishment.

In the film, Stewart Granger plays Jeremy Fox, an adventurer, George Sanders and Joan Greenwood play Lord and Lady Ashwood, a couple of genteel scoundrels. Viveca Lindfors plays Mrs. Minton, a mysterious lady who appears to be Granger's mistress. Not one of these characters appears in the book.

Of the book's characters, only the boy hero and some bit parts remain. (Even the long-dead "Blackbeard" Mohune is changed in the film to "Redbeard.") The only two of the book's incidents to remain in the film are the scene in the crypt and the discovery of the diamond down the well. The rest of the novel has been abandoned by MGM, and in its place has been erected an elaborate and interesting, though unsatisfactory, subplot to accommodate the stars. My appetite having been whetted, I wish the producer, John Houseman, would now enlighten me on the following points :

- Whose were the hands which frightened the boy in the graveyard ?
- Who and what was Mrs. Minton, and did she die in the ambush on the beach ? If so, was it suicide ?
- Was the boy actually Jeremy Fox's illegitimate son ?
- Were the Ashwoods killed when the coach overturned ?
- Did Fox die at sea, and if not, where was he heading for at the fade-out ?

In view of the fact that the deaths of these characters are left

doubtful, to say the least, I propose that the screenwriters of *Moonfleet* should now embark on a sequel to clear up the many mysteries of one of the oddest films ever to come out of Hollywood.

The Rex Cinema,
Magrath Avenue,
Cambridge.

Yours, etc.,
LESLIE HALLIWELL.

"Isn't Life Wonderful?"

Sir,—Can anyone enlighten me as to why, with all the learned writings one encounters on the work of D. W. Griffith, one rarely or never sees a word about one of his finest films, *Isn't Life Wonderful*? Certainly I've never seen it mentioned in any B.F.I. publication and have been moved to wonder if this film is not known or remembered in England at all.

Based on a short story by Geoffrey Moss and filmed largely in Germany, it appeared during 1925's brief upsurge of realism in the American film (Stroheim's *Greed*, von Sternberg's *Salvation Hunters*). Dealing with the struggle for existence of a family of Polish refugees in Germany just after the first World War, it was an amazingly realistic effort for D.W. (in spite of the ubiquitous flowery, sentimental subtitles) and portrayed with considerable directness poverty, starvation, squalid living conditions and food riots of the period. In many ways it seems now a precursor of not only Pabst's *The Joyless Street*, but of the Italian post-War-II neo-realist movement. By this time, of course, Griffith had passed his period of technical innovation, but the exciting cutting experiments of *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance* are here replaced by a less brilliantly showy but still sure and knowledgeable film-making style, and, in several major roles at least, a much more restrained and mature acting style, as evidenced by the finely sensitive performances of Carol Dempster and Neil Hamilton as the harried young couple whose love sustains them through all trials and gives rise to the somewhat Pollyanna-sounding title. Miss Dempster, particularly, was outstanding in a performance that would never be believed possible by those who had seen her only in, say, *America* or *Dream Street*.

Dismissed with a few lines in Lewis Jacobs' "Rise of the American Film" and seemingly totally ignored elsewhere, *Isn't Life Wonderful?* finally seems to be gaining a little recognition on this side of the water at least. It was given a week's showing by the Museum of Modern Art in New York last year, and has been shown by two Toronto film societies. Is it as unavailable and unknown over there as I assume?

10 Bowden Street,
Toronto,
Ontario.

Yours, etc.
G. G. PATTERSON.

(*REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* continued from page 160)

with something hectic, as if each privately felt the mood's evanescence and knew that happiness must always be furtive.

Nicholas Ray recaptures here something of the feeling of his first film, *They Live by Night*; and in general *Rebel Without a Cause* is his most interesting and personal work since that promising start. The direction, crisp and sensitive, does much to disguise the over-simplifications in the characters, and only occasionally forces the dramatic tone. But in the resolution of the problems, the script is unsuccessful. The private and suspicious Jim and the hard, joylessly gregarious Judy find, in the remote deserted garden, a release for their love. But the suggestion at the end, that for such deeply dislocated spirits, this easy acceptance of love could have a meaning beyond its ephemeral mood, is much too facile. Equally, the death of Plato who, having found happiness in his love for Jim, runs amok when he suspects it has been betrayed, is too conventionally contrived. It is true that the situations, initially simplified, could on their own terms proceed to a simplified solution; but here the characters are dwarfed in the anonymous dimensions of a "big scene."

All the same, the facts have been marshalled to form a valid emotional drama of high purpose, and in its scenes from a rarely opened family album, and its description of the pain and wildness of adolescence, *Rebel Without a Cause* achieves undeniable power. The accusations are couched in terms that the accused may debate but not avoid, and they infer a liberty to observe and make use of the current scene that film-makers in England can only envy.

DEREK PROUSE.

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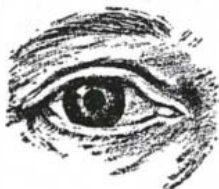
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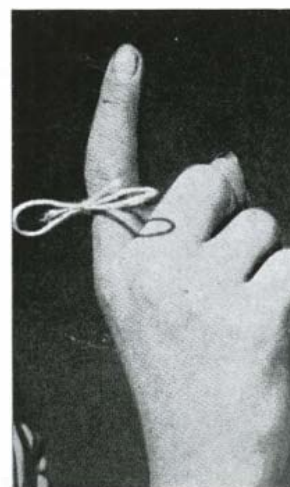
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